

# Germany's agony

# HISTORY OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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# History of the 20th Century

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## This week's contents:

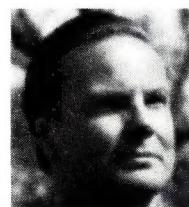
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- 1850 **Victory in the Atlantic**/  
Captain Donald Macintyre  
1856 **Alamein**/Correlli Barnett  
1864 **Stalingrad**/Alan Clark  
1870 **The Battle of Midway**/  
Ikuhiko Hata

## This week's authors



**Captain Donald Macintyre**  
served in the Fleet Air Arm as a pilot, and during the Second World War as an Escort Group Commander. Since his retirement in 1954, he has written numerous books on naval history, including *Jutland*, *The Battle of the Atlantic*, and *The Battle for the Pacific*.



**Correlli Barnett**  
read Modern History at Exeter College, Oxford, specializing in military history and the theory of war. His first book on military history, *The*

*Desert Generals*, was a study of British leadership during the Western Desert Campaigns of 1940-43. His second historical study, *The Sword-bearers*, was of four supreme commanders of the Great War—Moltke, Jellicoe, Pétain, and Ludendorff. Correlli Barnett was a historical consultant and scriptwriter to the BBC television series, *The Great War* and *The Lost Peace*. He has just completed a short history of the British Army.



**Alan Clark**  
served in the Royal Horse Guards in 1945-46, and in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force from 1951 to 1953. In 1963 he was elected to the

Institute for Strategic Studies. His publications include: *The Donkeys* (a history of the British Expeditionary Force in 1915), *The Fall of Crete*, and *Barbarossa, the Russian-German Conflict 1941-5*.



**Ikuhiko Hata**  
is at present Professor of History at the Japan National Defence College. From 1963 to 1964 he was a Research Associate of

Harvard University, and then became Senior Fellow of Columbia University. His publications include: *History of the Sino-Japanese War 1937-41*, *History of Japanese Military Fascist*

*Movement, and Illusion and Reality: Hidden Crisis between Japan and USSR 1931-33.*

## Further reading

### **Victory in the Atlantic**

Captain Donald Macintyre, *The Battle of the Atlantic* (Batsford); Captain Stephen Roskill, *The War at Sea* (HMSO); *The Memoirs of Admiral Dönitz* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

### **Alamein**

Correlli Barnett, *The Desert Generals* (William Kimber); Michael Carver, *El Alamein* (Batsford); Field-Marshal Montgomery of Alamein, *Memoirs* (Collins); Martin Blumenson, *Rommel's Last Victory* (Allen & Unwin).

### **Stalingrad**

Alan Clark, *Barbarossa* (Penguin Books); Geoffrey Jukes, *Stalingrad* (Macdonald); A. Werth, *Russia at War* (Pan); Paul Carell, *Hitler's War on Russia* (Harrap).

### **The Battle of Midway**

M.Fuchida and M.Okumiya, *Midway: The Battle that Doomed Japan* (Hutchinson); Walter Lord, *Incredible Victory* (Hamish Hamilton); Captain Donald Macintyre, *The Battle for the Pacific* (Batsford); S.E.Morison, *US Naval Operations in World War II* (Little & Brown).

## Next week in 68 The New Dark Age

### **The July Plot**

On 20th July 1944, there was a dramatic attempt by German anti-Nazis to kill the Führer. The outcome fulfilled the tragic prophecy by one of the leaders of the plot: 'We are only amateurs, and would only bungle it.' The attempt and its failure are described by Harold Kurtz in *The July Plot*.

### **Labour Service**

This account by a Hungarian Jew illustrates the prolonged and escalating process whereby free citizens were gradually transformed into hapless slaves—or forced to flee the country. In *The Hungarian Labour Service* George Floris relates his personal experiences during the Second World War.

### **Foreign Labour**

Not all foreign workers employed in the Third Reich were prisoners. As A.S.Milward shows in *Foreign Labour in the Third Reich*, many, of their own accord, sought factory jobs in Germany as a way of practising their skills and increasing their income.

### **The Nazis at War**

As Germany's war effort changed from a march of triumph to a plunge towards defeat, the Nazi leadership fragmented into power-hungry cliques struggling over a non-existent succession. These changes in the balance of internal power are discussed in *The Nazis at War* by Martin Broszat.

## Wartime Atrocities

During the Second World War the Germans were not the only people to commit atrocities, but the atmosphere in Nazi Germany was such that barbarous conduct could more readily pass for normal. *German Wartime Atrocities* is the subject of next week's article by M.R.D.Foot.

## The Final Solution

The Nazis' hatred of the Jews developed during the course of the war into a fanatical policy of extermination. Himself a Jew, Saul Friedländer describes how *The Final Solution* meant extermination unparalleled in its scale and barbarity.

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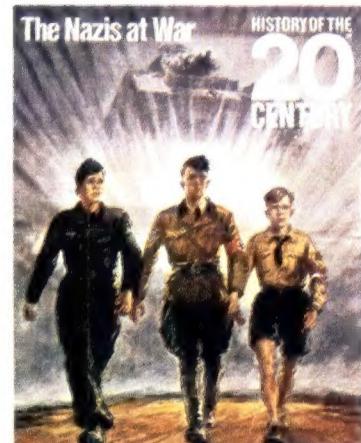
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## Cover of No 68



# Chapter 67

*Introduction by J.M.Roberts*

The cliché that it is darkest just before the dawn must have struck many Allied soldiers—soldiers of the United Nations, as they were now officially to be called—at the end of 1942. It had been a year opening in disaster: and it ended in victory. At last, the tide had visibly turned. These great events are the subject of this chapter.

All of our articles are about decisive battles, some quickly over, some long drawn-out. The quickest decision of all was arrived at over **The Battle of Midway**, almost on the International Date Line, one of a lonely cluster of islands, reefs, and atolls in the middle of the Pacific. In his article, Ikuhiko Hata not only explains the course of the great aircraft-carrier battle, fought near there by the aircraft from fleets which never encountered one another ship to ship, but also describes the important sequence of events within which it fell. Earlier battles had still left Japan the initiative: in a crucial five minutes, the Battle of Midway was lost irretrievably by the Japanese. ‘From that moment,’ wrote Churchill later, ‘all our thoughts turned with sober confidence to the offensive.’

At the other side of the world, the British were anxiously watching two other fronts. Captain Donald Macintyre takes to its logical conclusion the story of the one on which victory was indispensable in **Victory in the Atlantic**. The climax of Correlli Barnett’s second article on the fighting in North Africa, **Alamein**, was the moment at which a year of bad news finally came to an end. 1942 had opened miserably with a three-hundred mile retreat before Rommel in Cyrenaica. In June Tobruk fell and within another month the British Army was back in Egypt. But here the long story of disappointment and defeat ended. Victory at El Alamein in early November was swiftly followed by the Anglo-American landings in French North Africa which presaged the end of the African struggle six months later.

During the late summer and autumn, the last great German offensive in Russia was under way. By the end of July the Russians were thrown back across the upper Don, and the Germans were entering the Caucasus. Baku itself seemed threatened. Now the name of **Stalingrad** began to be heard. Here, as Alan Clark describes, was to be the grave of German hopes of victory in Russia. The great military blunder of making it a major objective was followed by Hitler with a worse one: refusal to withdraw from it. By the end of November Paulus’s army was trapped. Its death agonies were to last two months but its encirclement marked the turning of the hinge of fate in the savage fighting of Eastern Europe, just as surely as a few minutes bombing on 4th June had marked it in the Pacific, or a week of fighting at Alamein.



Imperial War Museum



Novosti



US Air Force

## The Naval War

- 1941 11th December: Germany declares war on USA. U-boats’ ‘Happy Time’ in American coastal waters begins.
- 1942 May: United States institutes convoy system. U-boat attacks in American coastal waters cease. U-boats move to Caribbean and Gulf. June: Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico incorporated into US convoy system. July: five U-boats sunk in American waters. U-boats’ ‘Happy Time’ is over. They move to mid-Atlantic ‘Black Gap’.
- 1943 March: Anti-U-boat Committee raises number of long-range Liberator aircraft available to Coastal Command. May: forty-one U-boats sunk in Atlantic. Dönitz withdraws U-boats from North Atlantic convoy routes. Allied victory in Battle of the Atlantic.

## North Africa

- 1942 25th June: Auchinleck becomes Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces. 26th-28th June: Battle of Mersa Matruh. British retreat to El Alamein. 1st-26th July: First Battle of Alamein. 6th August: Alexander becomes new c-in-c. 7th August: Montgomery takes command of 8th Army. 31st August-3rd September: Battle of Alam Halfa. Rommel tries to break through British. 23rd-25th October: first phase of Second Battle of Alamein. British breakthrough fails. 26th-31st October: second phase. Axis defences destroyed. 1st-4th November: third phase. Massive British breakthrough. Axis forces begin to retreat. 8th November: Anglo-American landings in Morocco and Algeria: Operation Torch.

## Eastern Front

- 1942 March: Soviet winter offensive ends. May: Red Army offensive to recapture Kharkov heavily defeated. 28th June: great German offensive in the south begins. Army Group South divides: Army Group A advances to the Caucasus. Army Group B advances to Stalingrad. 9th August: Army Group A reaches Caucasus. 3rd September: Hoth’s Panzers reach Volga. 19th November: Red Army counter-attacks. 23rd November: VI Army surrounded. 12th-23rd December: Hoth’s Panzers try to relieve encircled VI Army but fail.
- 1943 31st January: Paulus surrenders southern group of VI Army. 2nd February: rest of VI Army capitulates.

## The Battle of Midway

- 1942 18th May: Japanese flying-boat spots Vice-Admiral Halsey’s two aircraft-carriers. 26th May: I Carrier Striking Force sorties from Hashirajima. 27th May: Transport Group sails from Saipan. 28th May: Main Body, Midway invasion force Main Body, and Guard Force sorties from Hashirajima. 2nd June: VI Fleet’s interception unit at Kwajalein detects communications between what appear to be US aircraft-carriers. 4th June: 0430: I Carrier Striking Force arrives 240 Nautical miles north-west of Midway. The first attack wave takes off. 0534: US Catalina flying-boat sights I Carrier Striking Force. 0634: Japanese aircraft attack Midway. 0700: Task Force 16 sends up aircraft to attack I Carrier Striking Force. Lieutenant Tomonaga calls for second attack on Midway. 0728: Tone’s seaplane reports enemy surface ships. 0807: Tone’s seaplane reports sighting five cruisers and five destroyers. 0820: Tone’s seaplane reports sighting one aircraft-carrier. 0918: landings on Japanese carriers complete. 0930: Waldron’s torpedo-bombers attack Japanese carriers. They are annihilated. 1022: McClusky’s dive-bombers attack Kaga and Akagi. 1025: Leslie’s squadron begins dive-bombing Soryu. 1435: Air strike from Hiryu cripples Yorktown. 1703: Air strike from Enterprise and Hornet cripples Hiryu.



# Victory in the Atlantic

*The entry of America into the war brought a new 'Happy Time' for the German U-boats. Packs of German submarines roamed the Atlantic trade routes, imperilling the lifelines of the Allies—but by 1943 the Allies had learned how to hit back*

By December 1941 the stage had been set for a decisive encounter on the Atlantic convoy routes between the convoy escorts, surface and air, and the U-boats (p. 1757). The declaration of war on the United States by Germany on 11th December might, at first sight, have seemed to spell a huge access of strength to the escort forces, one which could tip the balance decisively in their favour. It was to prove, initially, quite the contrary.

Successive acts by the United States government since the President's declaration in July 1940 of a policy of 'all aid (to Great Britain) short of war' and the transfer of fifty over-age destroyers had clearly shown where American sympathies lay. In March 1941 'Lend-Lease' had been authorized and ten US coastguard cutters transferred to the Royal Navy. In July, when American troops relieved the British garrison in Iceland, US destroyers had begun to escort convoys to and from the island—convoys which ships of any nationality and ultimate destination could join. Two months later the US Navy had begun to take part in escort of transatlantic convoys during the western part of their voyages, on the grounds that ships for Iceland were included, and when five US destroyers were sent from Iceland to the aid of a convoy under attack in October, one of them, *USS Kearny*, had been torpedoed. A fortnight later *USS Reuben James*, escorting a convoy, was sunk with the loss of all but a handful of her crew.

Nevertheless, so long as the United States remained officially neutral, it had been German policy to avoid provocation. American declaration of a Defence Zone in the western half of the Atlantic had been respected to the extent that the great volume of merchant traffic thronging the sea route up the American east coast from the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico had been unmolested. Now, suddenly, it was open to attack.

This would not have been of vital consequence if effective protection for it had been prepared. Unfortunately, in spite of their own experience in the First World War and of more recent British experience, the fruits of which had been made freely available to them, the US Navy had taken no steps

*Far left: Depth-charge fired by an American submarine chaser off the coast of Florida. Left: Karl Dönitz, Commander of Submarines throughout the war and Commander-in-Chief of the German Navy from 1943. Nominated by Hitler as his successor, Dönitz was head of the German state at the time of Germany's surrender*

whatever to organize a convoy system. Shortage of escorts and the accepted dogma that inadequately escorted convoys were worse than none were given as the reasons, although in fact, some fifty per cent more surface craft and five or six times more aircraft were available than had been available to the British at the outbreak of the war.

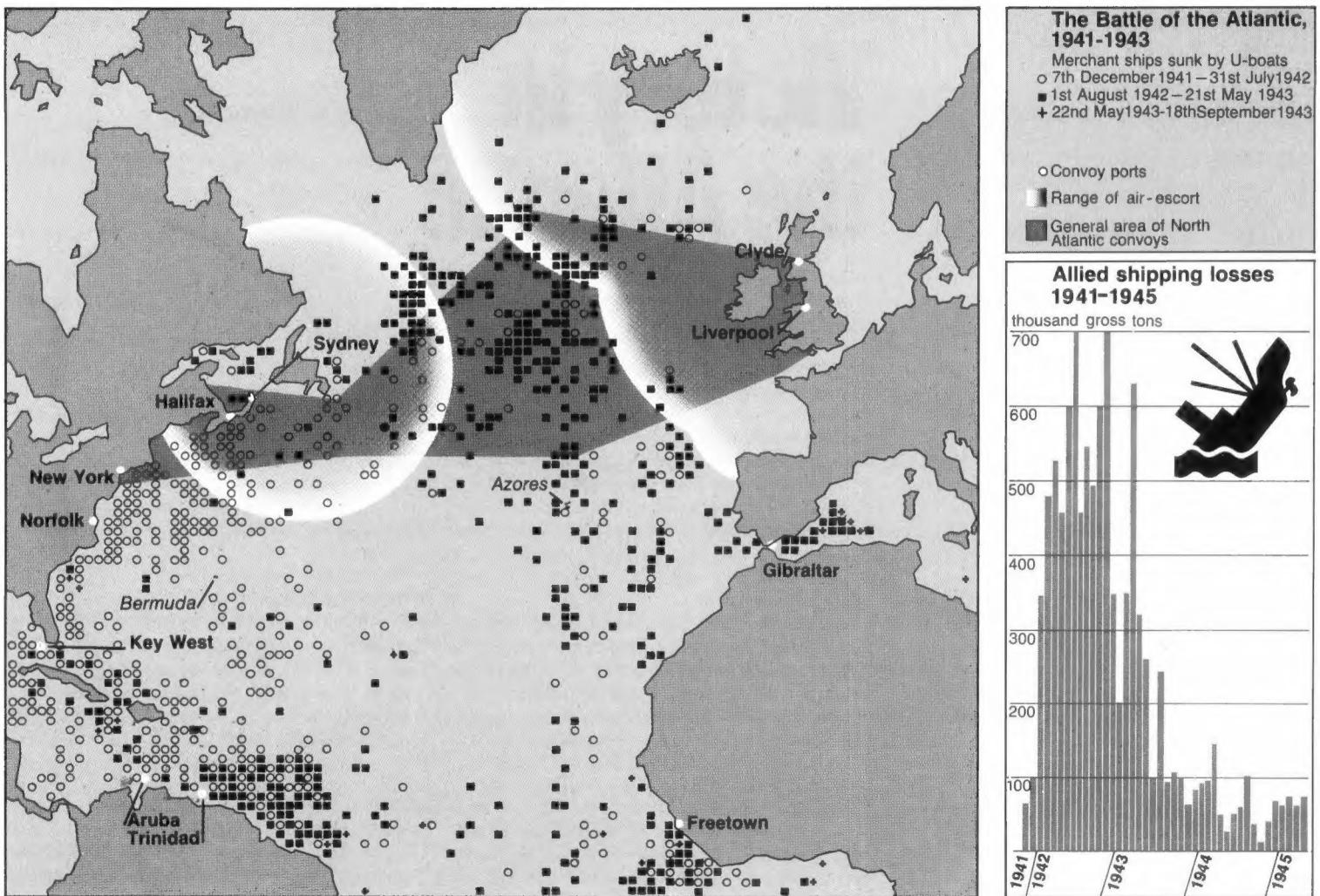
An equally potent influence, as with the British in 1916 and, to some extent, in 1939 and 1940, was the unquestioning cult of the offensive, which demanded the employment of such forces as there were on 'search and patrol'. Leaving the stream of freighters and tankers to steam independently, warships and aircraft patrolled the route and dashed hither and thither in search of U-boats which betrayed their position by sinking merchantmen. They were uniformly unsuccessful. Not one U-boat was destroyed off the American coast until April 1942, by which time more than 200 merchant ships and one of the patrolling destroyers had been sunk, many of them in sight of the shore.

#### *Holocaust in American waters*

The U-boat offensive began with only five boats, joined by three more before the end of January. Between 13th January and the end of the month they accounted for forty ships. Their easy success made Dönitz, the German Commander of Submarines, decide to deploy his whole available strength in American waters. Though frustrated by Hitler's insistence on retaining a number of U-boats in Norwegian waters and in the Mediterranean, he was able, by the use of supply U-boats, known as 'milch-cows', to loose his smaller, 750-ton boats, as well as the longer range 1,000 tonners in a simultaneous attack along the whole sea route from the Caribbean to New York.

The result was a holocaust. During February, sixty-five ships were sunk in American waters; in March eighty-six; a slight drop to sixty-nine in April was followed by a new 'high' in May of 111 ships. The Americans tried everything—except convoy—to stem the flow of Allied lifeblood. Ships were routed close in shore, the only result of which was to present an even denser stream of traffic to the attackers. Movements were restricted to daylight hours, ships sheltering in protected anchorages by night. Yet shipping losses continued to mount.

In May, at last, the Americans were convinced. A convoy system was instituted along their east coast. Sinkings in that area immediately ceased. The U-boats moved



Map of Battle of the Atlantic showing sinkings of Allied merchant ships by U-boats from December 1941 to the Allied victory in 1943. The area in mid-Atlantic not covered by air-escort is the 'Black Gap'. The table of Allied shipping losses shows the U-boats' 'Happy Time' from December 1941 to June 1942. The heavy losses of November 1942 were during the Allied Torch landings in North Africa

south to the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, however, where the stream of 'dependents', many of them valuable tankers, continued to flow. June saw the highest score of all, with 121 ships sunk in those waters. Nevertheless, conversion of US naval thought when it came was nothing if not whole-hearted. The Commander-in-Chief of the US Navy, Admiral King, had stated the view in March that 'inadequately escorted convoys were worse than none'. Now he went on record as saying that 'escort is not just one way of handling the submarine menace; it is the *only* way that gives any promise of success. The so-called patrol and hunting operations have time and again proved futile.'

By the end of June the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean were being incorporated into a comprehensive convoy system with sea and air escort. Sinkings there likewise ceased. In July five U-boats were destroyed in American waters. The second 'Happy Time' for U-boats was over. Once again the U-boat commanders sought for the weakest portion of the convoy chain. They found it in the 'Black Gap' in mid-Atlantic where air escort was still almost non-existent.

In the meantime both sides had grown stronger. U-boat losses had been few during the previous six months; the construction programme was in full swing. But the escorts had also greatly increased in numbers and efficiency. They had been formed into regular groups composed usually of

two destroyers and four corvettes, the former having been modified to give them more anti-submarine weapons and devices at the expense of gun armament. The majority had received intensive individual and group training. Except for one or two groups in which American coastguard cutters led a mixed flotilla of American, British, and Canadian escorts, about half the groups were British and half Canadian.

#### Improved equipment

Most escorts and anti-submarine aircraft had received the new ten-centimetre radar which enabled them to detect surfaced submarines at considerable ranges. Some ships were equipped with High Frequency Direction Finders (HFDF) by means of which the bearing and to some extent the range of a unit transmitting on short wave radio could be determined. The existence of these two devices was unknown to the Germans. The latter enabled the escort commander to send an escort ship or aircraft probing for any U-boat making the signals essential to the concentration of a wolf-pack. The former could then cause the U-boat to be surprised on the surface at night or in low visibility. When they then submerged they were hunted with greatly improved asdics and attacked with larger salvos of more powerful depth-charges.

So that escorts could remain with their convoys for the whole of the long voyage,

tankers from which they could refuel underway were included in the convoys. To avoid the need to distract escorts from the task of driving off and hunting down the attackers, rescue ships specially equipped to pick up and give medical aid to survivors of sunken merchant ships were also attached.

Where the improved equipment and well-led and trained groups combined, the U-boats were detected and foiled. Either for this reason or because of skilful diversions based on the information gathered in the U-boat tracking room in the Admiralty, the majority of convoys got through without loss. But in the rapid expansion of the escort force, particularly the Canadian element which had grown out of a tiny pre-war navy, there were bound to be groups lacking experience and ships in which provision of up-to-date equipment had been delayed. When convoys with such less effective escorts were located by the U-boats, scenes of earlier times were repeated with the defence swamped by the concentrated attack.

The primary antidote to such massed attacks was close air escort which, either by patrolling round the convoy or by flying along the bearings obtained by HFDF in the surface escorts, could force the U-boats to dive and so virtually immobilize them until the convoy had passed. Equipped with radar and, after more than two years of war, with effective depth-charges, these aircraft were the greatest dread of the U-



*A U-boat surfaces after being hit by a depth-charge fired by a British convoy escort vessel in the North Atlantic. Oil painting by Norman Wilkinson. On the deck of the escort in the foreground are torpedoes, usually used against enemy surface vessels but sometimes for sinking a torpedoed and burning merchant vessel which might give away the location of a convoy to a prowling U-boat*

boat commanders, allowing them no relaxation or opportunity to surface and recharge their batteries in peace by day or night. It was in the mid-Atlantic gap, therefore, that they preferred to operate, where so long as Coastal Command of the RAF was denied the very long-range Liberator aircraft they needed, only scanty air escort could be given.

It was to fill this 'Black Gap' in air cover that escort aircraft carriers, converted from merchant ships, were being constructed in American and British yards. The first four were in commission by the late summer of 1942; but it was then decided that they were required to give fighter cover to the forthcoming Anglo-American landings in North Africa. None could yet be spared for Atlantic convoy protection, though one of them, *HMS Avenger*, played a decisive part in fighting a convoy through to north Russia against a concentrated air and submarine attack in September.

So it was principally between the surface escorts and the U-boats in the 'Black Gap' that the battles round the Atlantic convoys were fought out. German ability to read coded messages between the Admiralty and the escorts enabled them to place U-boat patrol lines across the convoy routes. Where wolf-packs were able to concentrate, they inflicted some heavy losses. In August a slow convoy with a make-shift escort force lost eleven ships in a six-day running

fight. Two of the U-boats were destroyed. In the next month the U-boats sank nine ships from an outward-bound convoy without loss to themselves. Similar disasters to convoys continued to occur at intervals during the autumn and winter months.

In October an outward-bound convoy lost seven of its number as well as the destroyer *Ottawa* of its Canadian escort, and four more freighters were torpedoed and damaged without any loss to the wolf-pack. But in another convoy similarly beset, the loss of seven ships was offset by the destruction of two U-boats and several more damaged—a rate of exchange the U-boats could not afford. Had Dönitz been given his head to deploy his whole force in the Atlantic, the crisis in the Battle of the Atlantic would probably have developed at this time, perhaps with fatal consequences to the Allies; fortunately Hitler still insisted on maintaining a large U-boat strength in the Mediterranean and the Arctic. So the outcome hung in the balance while in the savage North Atlantic winter each side was as much occupied in fighting the wild weather as the enemy.

#### *Climax of the battle*

It was true that merchant ships were still being sunk, worldwide, at a rate greater than they could be replaced; but the American shipyards were swinging into full production. Furthermore the majority of merchant ship casualties were among

the independently-sailing vessels; these would get fewer and harder to find as the convoy system was being steadily extended. U-boat losses were by no means insupportable as yet and the number of operational boats was growing fast. But their opponents were gaining daily also in numbers and efficiency. Thus a climax in the Atlantic was approaching.

From the Allied point of view, as the storm-imposed winter lull was passing, three features of the situation made prospects for the spring of 1943 bright. At long last the Prime Minister's Anti-U-boat Committee, delivering a judgment of Solomon between the rival claimants for allocation of very long-range Liberator aircraft, reached a compromise which raised the number in Coastal Command from ten to forty, allowing about thirteen to be operational at any one time. By increasing the size of individual convoys and so reducing their frequency, enough escorts would be released to form independent support groups which could be used to reinforce threatened convoys. And, finally, the long-awaited escort carriers were at last to be employed in the task for which they had been conceived.

Yet March 1943 was to prove one of the most disastrous of the war in terms of merchant shipping lost. The more experienced escort groups had a well-founded confidence that they were a match for the wolf-packs; U-boats which encountered them paid

heavily for any sinkings they achieved. But it was not always possible to give convoys top quality protection; then disaster set in. Thus, while the well-trained veteran escorts of the mixed British, Polish, and Free French group were fighting a homeward-bound convoy through a dense U-boat concentration, destroying two of the enemy at the cost of four ships of the convoy and the escort commander's ship, another inexperienced group lost thirteen of their convoy without exacting any retribution.

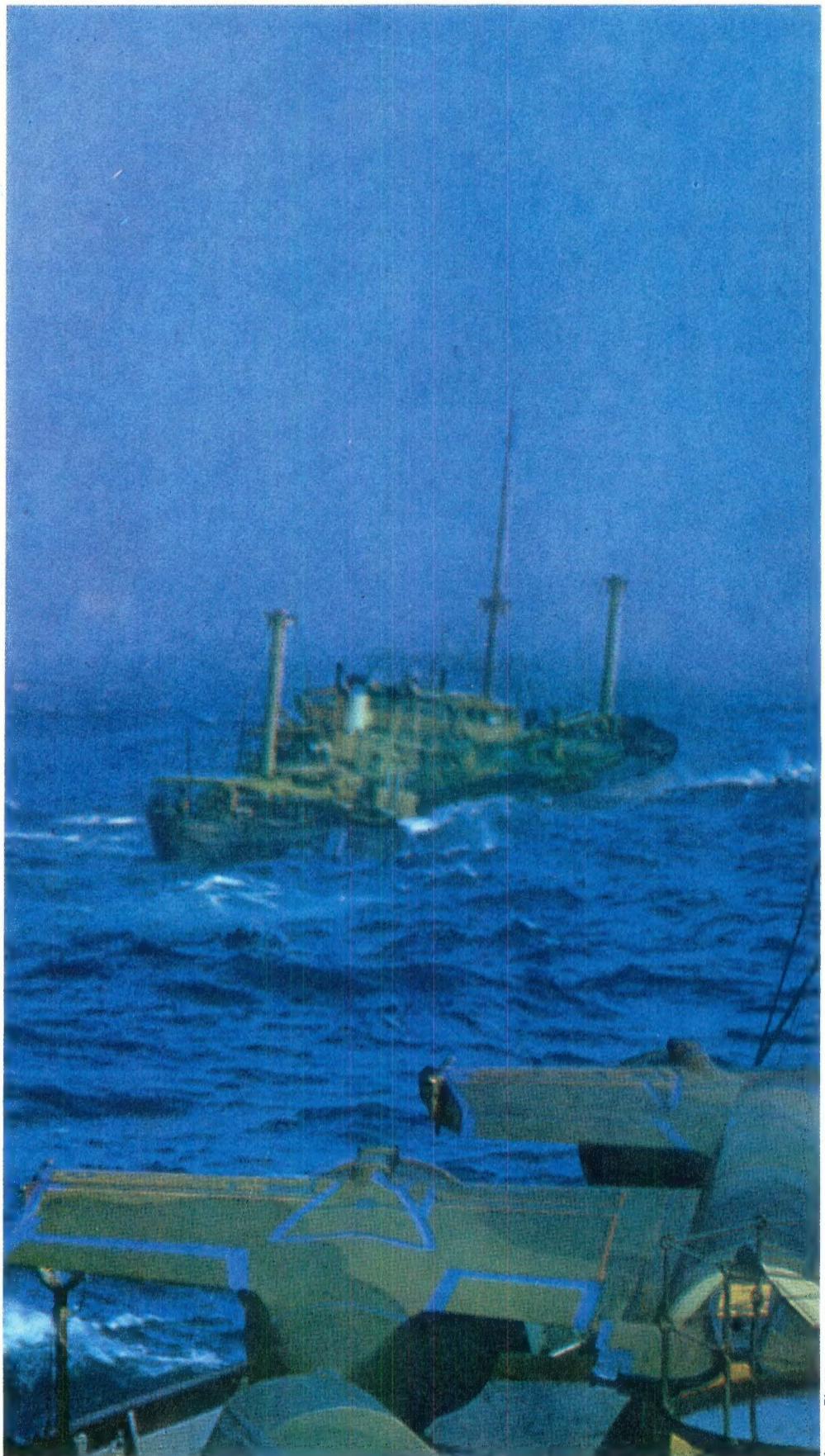
Then two convoys, a fast and a slow, homeward bound, each beset by a large wolf-pack, came together to make one huge, widespread chaotic struggle in which twenty-one merchantmen were lost and, though one U-boat was finally sunk and Dönitz was to record that 'nearly all the other boats suffered from depth-charges or bombs and two were severely damaged', viewed from the Admiralty the scale of disaster was appalling. For a while the validity of the convoy system came in question.

The loss of morale was brief, however, being restored by the safe arrival of the next two convoys in spite of their being similarly threatened by several wolf-packs. In fact the elements which were to ensure the defeat of the U-boat were now present for the first time. The escort carrier, *USS Bogue*, and a support group of British destroyers gave these convoys cover through the danger area. By the end of March five British support groups were ready for operations, one of them centred on the escort carrier *HMS Biter*.

#### ***U-boats checked***

At the same time a stream of fresh U-boats from Germany and the Biscay bases, no less than ninety-eight during April, was setting out for mid-Atlantic for what was to be the decisive battle. Convoys were duly located; yet somehow, inexplicably to the Germans, the well-tried techniques for gathering the wolf-packs failed. Hardly had the U-boat making contact flashed his radio message to headquarters when there would be seen the sharp stem and frothing bow wave of a racing destroyer following up the bearing obtained by her HFDF set or a Liberator plane directed by the escorts diving to the attack. Often it was the last object in the outside world the U-boat crew would see. The first signal would be the last; at U-boat headquarters another U-boat lost would be chalked up. At best, the submarine would be forced to stay submerged, blind and reduced to a crawl,

*An Allied convoy in the North Atlantic. The ship in the foreground carries American aircraft bound for Britain.*  
Photograph by Robert Capa



while the convoy slipped through the patrol line to safety.

In the last week of April five U-boats were destroyed round the convoys for an almost negligible loss of merchant ships. However Dönitz did not yet concede victory. During May his force was deployed in massed attacks against the convoys. Sixty U-boats fought an eight-day battle with the escorts of an outward-bound convoy in the first week of that month. By the end of the month twelve merchant ships had been sunk; but it had cost the attackers eight of their number with many others severely damaged.

As the losses became known and the tales of narrow escapes by the survivors spread through the U-boat fleet, the nerves of the submarine crews cracked. Redirected on to other convoys they refused to press home their attacks and even so they were detected and surprised on the surface by air and surface escorts. A number were sunk; the convoys steamed on unscathed. During May forty-one U-boats were sunk, twenty-five of them by the air and surface escorts, seven more, on passage in the Bay of Biscay, were surprised on the surface by aircraft equipped with new radar. At last Dönitz accepted defeat, at least for the time being, and withdrew all U-boats from the North Atlantic convoy routes.

#### Allied victory

It is generally accepted that May 1943 marked Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic. To quote from Captain Roskill's official history, *The War at Sea*: 'After forty-five months of unceasing battle of a more exacting and arduous nature than posterity may easily realise, our convoy escorts had won the triumph they so richly merited.'

Nevertheless, though Dönitz was forced to abandon his efforts against the transatlantic convoys, he has recorded in his memoirs his conclusion at that time that 'the U-boat campaign must be continued with the forces available. Losses, which bear no relation to the success achieved, must be accepted, bitter though they are.' Furthermore, new weapons were under development which could tip the balance back in his favour.

Having started the war equipped with a torpedo which was unreliable in its depth-keeping, his U-boats had been forced to limit their attacks to deep-draught vessels and could not strike back at the escorts. Now, however, a torpedo was under trial which, by means of an acoustic device in its head, would 'home' on to the propeller noises of a ship. With this, a hunted submarine could turn the tables on its attacker.

When Holland was overrun, Dutch submarines had been captured which had an ingenious device, a *Schnorkel* or breathing

tube through which a submerged submarine could draw air to enable it to run its diesel engines to propel it, as well as to recharge its electric storage batteries. The Germans now adopted this; U-boats when fitted with it would no longer need to come to the surface, exposing themselves to radar detection. The menace from the air would then be largely overcome. Finally a new U-boat with greatly increased battery power, the Type XXI which would be able to make as much as 18 knots submerged, was being designed.

#### *U-boats' last hope*

The knowledge that these several improvements were in the offing kept hope alive. Meanwhile the U-boats were redeployed in the hope of finding more profitable and less dangerous areas. In the Caribbean and off the coast of Brazil there were still some independently sailing ships to be found; but there were convoys, too, and in attacking them eight U-boats were destroyed by the air escorts. Once again the survivors were withdrawn.

Another group had been sent to an area south-west of the Azores to intercept United States to Mediterranean convoys. They found themselves harried by aircraft from American escort carriers. In June *USS Bogue*'s group sank two U-boats. In the next month the *Bogue*, *Core*, and *Santee* destroyed six more; not a single merchant ship was sunk.

But in the meantime the work of re-equipping the U-boats had pressed ahead — acoustic torpedoes to strike back at surface escorts, increased anti-aircraft armament, an improved radar search receiver, and a radar decoy to reduce the threat from the air. On 13th September Dönitz announced 'all the essentials for a successful campaign are to hand'. Once again they were launched against the main transatlantic convoys. They found them even more effectively guarded than before.

The target they first assailed comprised a conjunction of two convoys, a fast and a slow, which being fairly close to one another when the threat developed, had been ordered to unite. The total of sixty-five merchant ships thus had no less than fifteen escorts as well as a merchant aircraft carrier (MAC-ship), one of a number of tankers and grain ships which had been equipped with a flight deck from which four *Swordfish* aircraft could operate.

Emboldened by the possession of acoustic torpedoes, the U-boats fought their way through the screen by night, sinking three escorts in the process. Heavy casualties resulted from the loss of one of these which had embarked the survivors from another. Six merchant ships were torpedoed; two U-boats were destroyed and two more severely damaged. The Germans believed

they had sunk many more escorts and were pleased with their new offensive tactics.

The sudden revelation of the new weapon was certainly a blow to the morale of the escort crews; but it was quickly countered by towing a noise-maker at a distance astern — a device known as a 'foxer' — which diverted the acoustic torpedo away from its target. With this, the escorts' ascendancy was re-established. A second massacre of U-boats round the North Atlantic convoys followed, and by November the U-boat command was seeking fresh remedies, including a renewal of co-operation by long-range aircraft.

In the face of the combined air and surface escort now available to convoys and of support groups, often operating with escort carriers, ever poised to intervene when a convoy was threatened, nothing availed. In February 1944 the most successful of the support groups, 2nd Escort Group commanded by Captain F.J. Walker, during a three-week patrol accounted for six U-boats in the vicinity of the three convoys it assisted. At the end of March the Germans again conceded victory on the North Atlantic convoy routes; U-boats were transferred to independent cruises in southern waters.

#### *The submarine dominated*

A feature of these was the necessity to refuel in mid-Atlantic from milch-cows. And here, time and again, US escort carrier groups, aided by good intelligence, surprised and destroyed them. Compelled to abandon mid-ocean refuelling, the U-boats' time on patrol became so restricted that their operations were uneconomical and ineffective. The submarine had been completely dominated.

The Battle of the Atlantic could finally be seen to have been won by the Allies. The fruits of the victory gained in May 1943 were now to be gathered as the anti-submarine forces went over to the offensive. Although the U-boats continued to fight with a dogged and desperate courage, their expectation of survival was reduced to one and a half sorties each; though equipment with the *Schnörkel* device greatly reduced the danger from air attack and of being surprised on the surface by night while re-charging their batteries, the U-boat threat was nevertheless reduced to negligible proportions from this time onwards. Never again were they seriously to threaten the vital life-line between Europe and America.

How near the campaign had come to achieving victory for the Germans can perhaps best be judged from the wry admission by Winston Churchill: 'The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.'

# Alamein

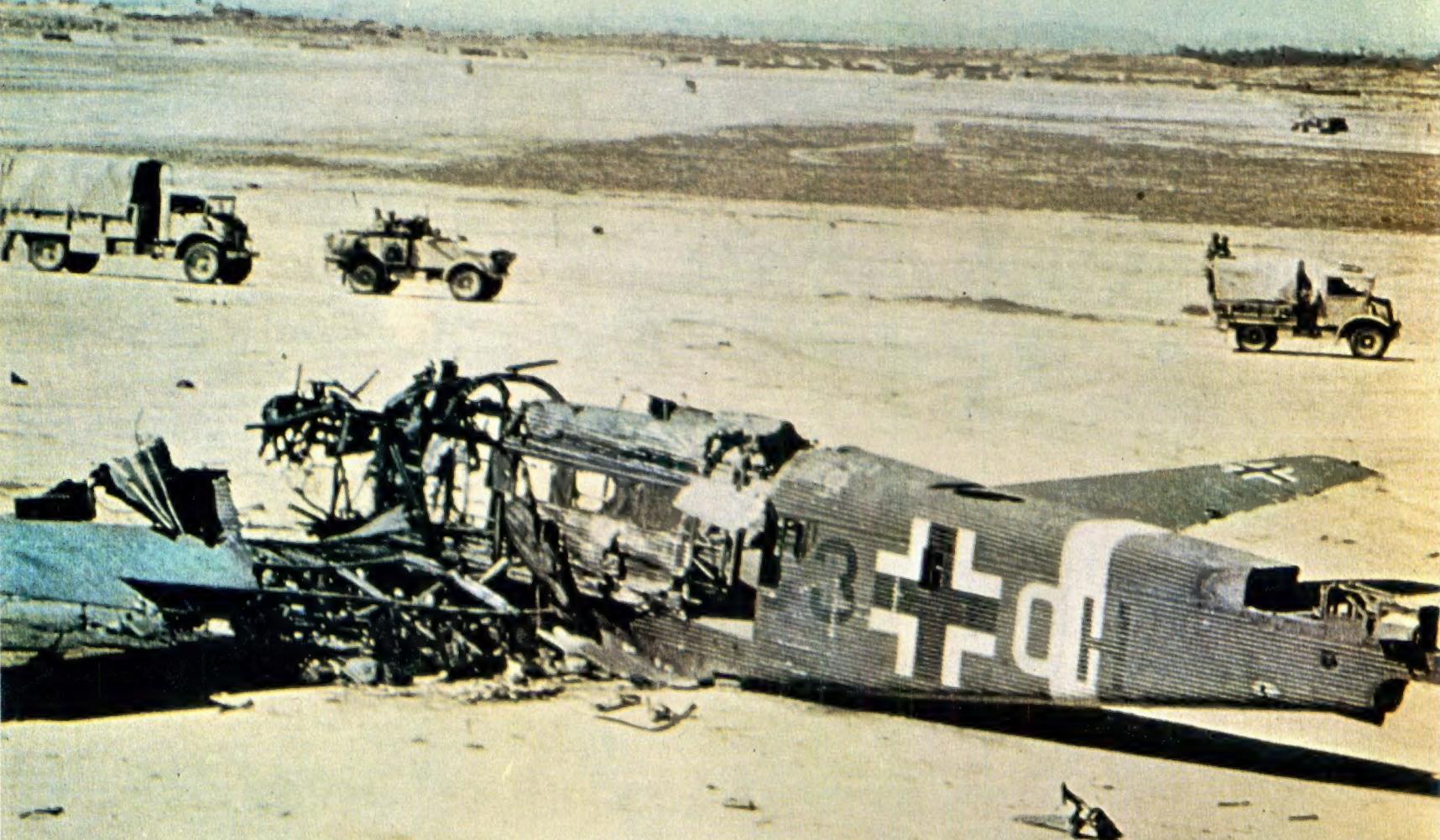
*In July 1942 Rommel was poised to seize Egypt. But in October at El Alamein the tide at last turned finally against the Germans in Africa*

General Sir Claude Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces, took over personal command of 8th Army from Lieutenant-General Neil Ritchie on 25th June 1942. There is little doubt that Auchinleck had been ill-judged in February 1942 when he confirmed Ritchie in what had been a temporary command, despite evidence and advice that Ritchie lacked the experience and capacity to command an army. Equally it would have been well if Auchinleck, as the Prime Minister had urged, had taken personal charge of the Gazala battles (p. 1792) at an early stage. However, the Western Desert was only one among the commander-in-chief's several cares. It was not so simple a matter to go

off and look after a single front. For although the Middle East Command had shed East Africa since Wavell's time, it was still responsible for support of Turkey, a neutral state, and for the defence of the Persian Gulf oilfields from attack from the north, through the Caucasus. Auchinleck had lived with this latter danger ever since the German invasion of Russia had reached the Don the previous autumn.

Auchinleck, therefore, unlike his predecessors or his successor, bore the double

*Wrecked German Junkers 52. The 52s were shot down in vast numbers after British control of the Mediterranean forced the Germans to use them for supplies*



burden of an army commander and of a theatre commander-in-chief.

For this reason it was Auchinleck's belief as commander-in-chief that 8th Army must not be exposed to the risk of a final defeat, but must at all cost be kept in being, in order to continue to defend the Gulf oil from Rommel. Whereas Ritchie had planned a do-or-die battle at Mersa Matruh, Auchinleck wished to retreat to El Alamein which would give him a little time to re-organize his forces and plan his own battle instead of fighting Ritchie's. But Rommel struck the day after Auchinleck assumed personal command. The Battle of Mersa Matruh (26th-28th June 1942), fought in decayed defences according to Ritchie's deployment, marked the climax of German moral domination in the desert. With handfuls of exhausted troops Rommel bluffed the British (including fresh, strong formations) into thinking they were broken through, surrounded, and beaten, while poor communications virtually cut Auchinleck off from the battle. As soon as he saw the compromised battle was lost, Auchinleck ordered the army back to Alamein. Both armies, units all mixed up, raced each other for the forty-mile-wide neck between the sea at Alamein and the impassable Qattara Depression. Alexandria lay only sixty miles beyond.

Although 8th Army narrowly won the race, the British still faced the possibility, in Auchinleck's words, of 'complete catastrophe'. 'No one,' he wrote later, 'least of all I, could say whether the Army could be rallied and re-formed soon enough to hold Rommel and save Egypt.' Auchinleck thus faced the greatest test of a general—the rallying of a beaten army and the redemption of a lost battle. Behind him in Egypt there was panic and defeatism. He told his soldiers: 'The enemy is stretching to his limit and thinks we are a broken army... He hopes to take Egypt by bluff. Show him where he gets off.'

In fact this was an accurate military appreciation. By failing to halt after Tobruk to allow Malta to be attacked, as agreed, Rommel had taken an immense gamble. For unless he managed to break through to the Delta very quickly, his army would be increasingly starved of supplies, reinforcements, and fuel, owing both to British naval action based on Malta and the length of his own communications. On 1st July, three days after Matruh, Rommel attacked 8th Army at Alamein.

The essential unity of all the fighting at Alamein from July to November 1942 has been obscured by the changes in the British command that took place in mid-August, when General Sir Harold Alexander replaced Auchinleck as commander-in-chief and Lieutenant-General B.L. Montgomery became the new 8th

Army commander. It was one extended battle with pauses between the actions. It opened with Rommel's desperate attempts to shoulder his way past Auchinleck, his failure, and the failure in turn of Auchinleck to force him into retreat. This was the First Battle of Alamein (1st-26th July 1942). There followed a period of stalemate broken only by an unrealistic and vain second attempt by Rommel to break through: the Battle of Alam Halfa (31st August-3rd September). Finally came the British counter-stroke with massive fresh forces that swept Rommel out of Egypt. This was Montgomery's victory in the Second Battle of Alamein (23rd October-4th November 1942).

The commanding natural features of the Alamein battlefield (although so slight as to be discernible only to the military eye) were two east-west ridges, the Ruweisat Ridge, and farther to the south and well to the east, the Alam Halfa Ridge. These were the tactical keys to the neck of land between the sea and the Qattara Depression. At no time in the Alamein battles was this neck solidly held by the British. In July Auchinleck had lacked the troops, and later he (and after him Montgomery) preferred to form a south-facing left wing that might entice Rommel into a trap.

Auchinleck's army at First Alamein was made up of survivors of the Gazala battles like 1st South African and 50th Divisions, survivors of Matruh like the New Zealand divisions and 9th Indian Brigade, together with fresh troops like 18th Indian Brigade from Iraq. Auchinleck was weakest in armour, for although 1st Armoured Division possessed 150 tanks, only two squadrons were Grants, and the division's skill, cohesion, and morale were not high. Nevertheless 8th Army heavily outnumbered Panzer Army Africa, now reduced to 60 German and 30 Italian tanks, some 5,000 Germans, and a similar number of Italians.

As a personal adviser and acting chief of staff in the field Auchinleck had brought with him from Cairo Major-General E. Dorman-Smith. He was not a member of the British army 'establishment' who had muddled the Gazala battles, but a man fertile in unorthodox ideas. These were reflected in some of the reforms Auchinleck attempted to carry out in the army's organization and tactics during First Alamein. Auchinleck believed that the standard British infantry division was too large, cumbersome, and lacking in hitting power for mobile desert warfare. He therefore extemporized brigade-groups or smaller 'battle-groups' on the German pattern—trucked infantry escorting guns. Instead of manning the static defences of the Alamein perimeter, he kept the brigade-groups of 1st South African Division mobile in the open desert to the south. After the first

day's fighting he also evacuated two 'boxes' in the centre and extreme south of the Alamein neck, in order to keep his army mobile and concentrated. (Boxes were strongpoints surrounded by wire and mine-fields.) At the same time the heavy and medium artillery was transferred from corps to army command to provide massed firepower. Auchinleck also tried to diminish the sluggishness and rigidity of the stratified British command organization by demanding the energetic local initiative and flexibility evinced by the enemy. The course of the First Battle of Alamein was to show that orders or instructions in this spirit failed to have much effect on minds habituated to another military tradition.

#### ***First Battle of Alamein***

Although First Alamein was a highly complicated and shifting battle on the ground, it was essentially a struggle of will between the opposing generals. The struggle lasted for the first two weeks of July and ended with Rommel's surrender of the initiative to Auchinleck.

On 1st July Rommel tried to repeat his triumph at Mersa Matruh with a similar plan and similar audacity. He proposed to drive through Auchinleck's centre and turn outwards in a double envelopment of Auchinleck's wings. Both envelopments stuck under heavy flanking-fire from British battle-groups. On 2nd July Rommel reduced his plan to a single envelopment of the Alamein perimeter. This too failed. On 3rd July he tried again in the centre, made some progress, and stuck again, despite his own personal leadership of the attack. On 2nd and again on 5th July Auchinleck counter-attacked elsewhere, forcing Rommel to re-group, but 8th Army proved a slow and hesitant instrument. However, Rommel was forced to deploy Italian infantry for the first time since he attacked at Gazala. Nevertheless he decided to attack again on 10th July, after a brief respite, and try to break straight through eastwards into the Delta. Instead, on 9th July Auchinleck launched a major counterstroke in the coastal sector: a bombardment that reminded some Germans of the Western Front in 1917, followed by an assault by Auchinleck's personal reserve, the fresh 9th Australian Division. The Italians collapsed, the hill of Tel el Eisa fell, and Rommel had to abandon his own offensive in order to succour the Italians.

It was Auchinleck's plan (suggested by Dorman-Smith) to go for the Italians in one sector after another, thus forcing Rommel to run to and fro to their aid with his Germans. It worked brilliantly. Between 9th and 16th July six such attacks on Italians were launched, and Rommel only prevented the total collapse of his front by using his last German reserves.

On 21st-22nd July and 26th July Auchinleck attempted to turn Rommel's defeat into his destruction or retreat. These counter-strokes were a total failure. The cause lay yet again in the gulf of misunderstanding between British armour and infantry, which were incapable of the supple and intimate co-operation of the German troops who were trained together on common lines. A further cause lay in a breakdown of radio communication. Either the infantry was massacred by German armour because the British armour failed to come up in time; or the armour was massacred trying to 'charge' German defences that should have been carefully assaulted in conjunction with infantry.

Although Rommel had not been forced to retreat, First Alamein saved Egypt and the Middle East. It was one of the decisive battles of the Second World War.

It was Dorman-Smith's prediction, expressed in a strategic appreciation of 27th July accepted by Auchinleck, that Rommel even after reinforcement would not be strong enough to launch another offensive except as a gamble. Auchinleck therefore looked ahead to a set-piece British offensive in strength some time in September.

Meanwhile the British and American governments had taken a major strategical decision. Instead of an invasion of France in 1942, deemed a hopeless undertaking with the available troops and landing craft, the Allies were to invade French North Africa in the autumn, and, in conjunction with 8th Army, clear the entire North African coast. This operation would both re-open the Mediterranean to through sea traffic and appease Stalin with some kind of a 'second front' at not too great a risk of failure. The decision was made on 24th July, after Auchinleck had halted Rommel's offensive. It entirely changed the context of the war in the desert, for occupation of Algeria and Tunisia would directly threaten Rommel's own base at Tripoli, and squeeze him between two armies.

### Churchill visits the front

On 3rd August Churchill and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff arrived in Cairo. On 6th August, after visiting Auchinleck at 8th Army Headquarters, Churchill decided to replace Auchinleck and his immediate staff. General Sir Harold Alexander was appointed commander-in-chief, and Major-General W.H.E. Gott, a corps commander with a legendary though not altogether justified reputation, was appointed to command 8th Army. In these decisions personal political considerations undoubtedly played a large part. There was mounting public criticism of Churchill's leadership in Great Britain, and by-elections had gone heavily against the government. There had been a long

run of disaster: the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, the fall of Singapore, the loss of Burma, the loss of Tobruk, the Gazala battles. Churchill needed a resounding victory as quickly as possible to preserve his own position. There can be little doubt that Auchinleck therefore sealed his fate when he stubbornly refused to promise to attack before mid-September, arguing that this was the earliest that 8th Army could be re-organized and re-trained, and the new equipment run in.

Churchill instructed the new Commander-in-Chief Middle East, General Alexander, that his primary task was 'to take and destroy the German-Italian army commanded by Field-Marshal Rommel.' The commander-in-chief was relieved of anxiety about the German threat from the Caucasus (the German offensive in Russia poured across the Don into the Caucasus on 24th July, in the last days of First Alamein), for Iraq and Persia were transferred to a new command. Thus in the end all the vast existing resources of the Middle East base, and the immense reinforcements and supplies now flowing into Egypt had come to be devoted to the single purpose of fighting four somewhat neglected German divisions and their Italian allies. It was a measure of the success of the German diversion in North Africa, and also of the usefulness of the British Empire's contribution to ground fighting in the third year of the war. The Red Army was currently engaging some 180 German divisions, including twenty Panzer divisions.

Alexander's sole responsibility was therefore to support his 8th Army commander. On 7th August, however, Gott was killed, when the aircraft flying him to Cairo was shot down, and Lieutenant-General Montgomery was appointed commander of 8th Army. Montgomery was a man of legendary eccentricity and ruthless professionalism. He had not commanded in the field since 1940, had never commanded large masses of armour in battle, and was new to the desert. He compensated for these initial handicaps by a brilliant clarity of mind, iron willpower, and a bleak realism about the potentialities of individuals and units alike. He had an unrivalled power of piercing complex matters to the underlying simplicities. In August 1942 he enjoyed the advantage of the new broom, and he swept very clean indeed.

His first task was to meet the renewed German offensive which was expected soon. His plan, like that evolved by Auchinleck and Dorman-Smith, depended on forming a south-facing left wing along the Alam Halfa Ridge, and his main dispositions followed the existing defences and mine-fields. However, he brought up 44th Division, now available, to strengthen Alam Halfa. Although his general plan so closely

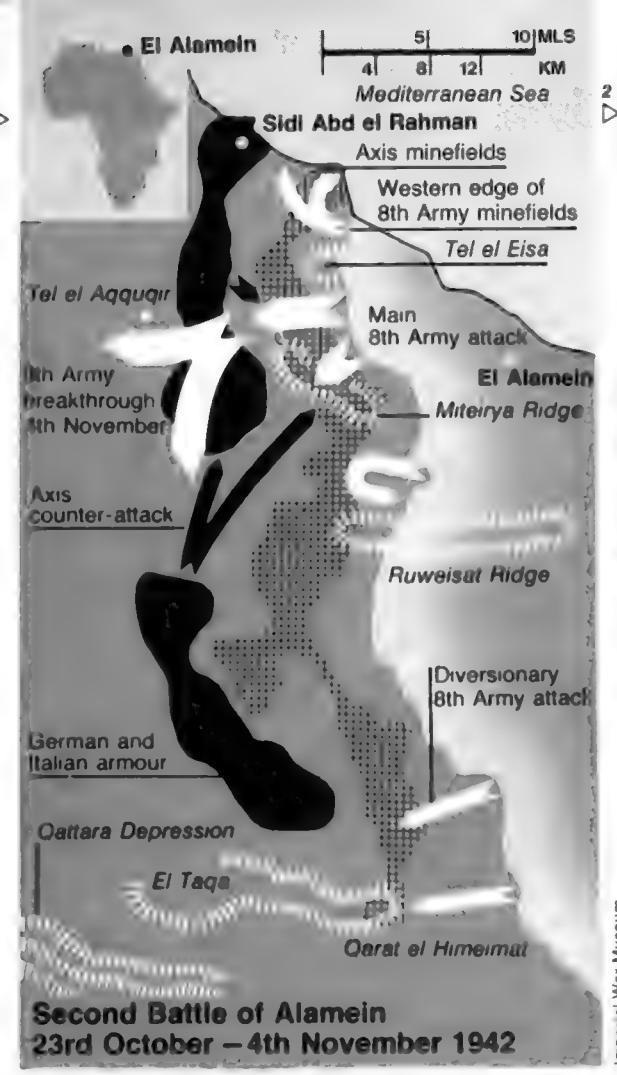
resembled Auchinleck's, his style of fighting the battle was very different. He accurately took the measure of 8th Army's capabilities and enforced his own direct control right down to division level. It would be in his own words 'an army battle'. There would be no loose fighting, but a tight defence of tactical ground.

Rommel launched his offensive on 31st August 1942. It was, as Dorman-Smith had predicted in July, a gamble without much chance. Rommel had 203 tanks against 767 British; he himself and several senior officers were sick; and his army was so short of fuel that it had to make a tight turn up to the Alam Halfa Ridge instead of outflanking it to the east. After four days of vain effort to pierce the British defences while under violent air attack he slowly withdrew. An attempt by the New Zealand Division to endanger his retreat broke down in the usual 8th Army muddles and misunderstandings. Except for this failure Montgomery's first battle had been entirely successful. He was free to continue preparing his own offensive.

Alexander like Auchinleck was strongly pressed by the Prime Minister for an early offensive. He and Montgomery, with the advantage of being new men who could not be sacked, also refused. They, like Auchinleck, realized that an immense amount of training and preparation was needed before 8th Army would be fit to attack. In fact the Second Battle of Alamein opened on 23rd October, and even then 8th Army was by no means up to German standards.

The chronic problem lay in the inability of the British armour and infantry to work closely together. It originated in peace-time, when the British failed to evolve a coherent doctrine of tank warfare, but instead divided ground war into two separate compartments – the infantry battle of positions, and the (almost) all-tank mobile battle. Just before his departure Auchinleck had proposed to re-model the whole 8th Army into German-style mixed tank-infantry divisions. Co-operation would be secured under a single divisional command. Montgomery and his advisers instead decided to form a special wholly armoured corps (10th) in addition to the existing 30th and 13th Corps, charged with fighting a tank battle and then exploiting in pursuit. Thus co-ordination of armour and infantry would not now be secured by

**Right:** Second Battle of Alamein, 23rd October-4th November 1942. It marked the beginning of the Allied offensive to clear North Africa of Axis troops. 1 Map showing 8th Army attack and breakthrough. 2 Australians advance behind a smoke screen during final phase of the battle, 3rd November. 3 Italians make an attack on a British position, October 1942



## Alamein

divisional commanders, or corps commanders as hitherto, but by the army commander himself. The course of Second Alamein was to show that Montgomery also failed even by this scheme to solve the problem of armour and infantry.

### *Second Battle of Alamein*

In planning his offensive Montgomery faced what was for the desert a novel problem. Rommel had created a continuous defence system across the forty-mile-wide neck between the sea and the Qattara Depression. It was of the standard German pattern dating back to 1917—a maze of strongpoints and switchlines, protected by belts of wire, in minefields some  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles deep, and garrisoned by intermingled German and Italian infantry. Close behind lay the Panzer divisions. To this Western Front problem Montgomery produced a Western Front answer—a deliberate infantry attack under cover of a massive bombardment to drive a gap right through both the forward and main battle zones of the enemy defence system. The 10th Corps (armour) would then pass through this gap on to the enemy communications and fight and defeat the Panzer divisions. Montgomery recognized however that the skill and training of 8th Army was such that any 'mixing it' with the Panzer Army in the open would be risky. He therefore altered his plan to make it even more deliberate and methodical. The armour would merely defend the gap made in the enemy defences against counter-strokes, while behind its shield the defence system and its infantry garrison would be 'crumpled' away piecemeal. This Montgomery hoped would force the Panzer divisions to attack to try to save the infantry and expose themselves to defeat by British tanks and anti-tank guns fighting defensively.

For the battle Montgomery fielded 1,029 tanks against 496 (220 German); 1,451 anti-tank guns against 550 German and 300 Italian; 908 field and medium guns against 200 German and 300 Italian (plus 18 heavy howitzers); 85 infantry battalions against 31 German and 40 Italian. The overall odds were about two to one: 195,000 men against just over 100,000. For the first time the British anti-tank artillery was principally composed of powerful six-pounders, while the armour included 252 American Shermans, tanks at last really the equal of German equipment. The British enjoyed complete air superiority.

The Second Battle of Alamein fell into three phases. During 23rd-25th October the original plan of breaking clean through the German left centre failed. The infantry assault, instead of piercing the German defence system in one bound as ordered, spent its force in the German forward zone and stalled in the battle zone. Mont-



Imperial War Museum



SEARCH



gomery ordered 10th Corps (armour) to force its own breakthrough, then modified his order to one armoured regiment; but the armour too became bogged down in the German defences. The super-imposition of two corps (10th and 30th) on the same sector caused much confusion. In the second phase of the battle (26th-31st October) Montgomery re-made his plan of operations and got a stalled offensive on the move again by sheer force of will. In this phase divisional attacks 'crumbled' the Axis defences away, while Rommel's counter-strokes (he had returned from a hospital bed in Austria to take command) foundered under air attack and anti-tank fire. In the third phase (1st-4th November) 3 Montgomery (who had patiently re-created a reserve) launched a second massive breakthrough attempt. After fierce fighting and heavy loss the British this time succeeded. An order from Hitler to stand fast delayed the Axis retreat for twenty-four hours, and then the Panzer Army streamed west in defeat.

Second Alamein, like the battles of 1917, had turned on the size of reserves available to both sides. Although the Panzer Army had consistently inflicted a higher rate of loss on the British throughout the battle (the British lost more tanks than the original total German strength), the British superiority in resources proved just too great. Yet it had been a near-run battle for the exhaustion and confusion of 8th Army prevented immediate and effective pursuit.

Nevertheless the Panzer Army had been shattered: most of the Italian infantry were captured (some 26,000) and only 36 German tanks remained in action.

Because of the late pursuit, the British failed to cut off and destroy the remnants of Rommel's army. There followed a long pursuit and retreat back to Rommel's old bolt-hole of El Agheila characterized by bluff on Rommel's part and caution on Montgomery's – perhaps understandable in view of Rommel's reputation.

Meanwhile the Anglo-American landings in North Africa (Operation Torch) had taken place on 8th November. 'This,' wrote Rommel, 'spelt the end of the army in Africa.'

*Left: 1 Montgomery, wearing Australian hat, discusses military situation with officers of 22nd Armoured Brigade in August 1942, soon after taking command of 8th Army. 2 Painting by British war artist Anthony Gross of desert casualties. 3 A barbed-wire fence is lifted to enable Rommel (striding ahead) to pass through to inspect units of the Afrika Korps. Overleaf: Painting by Ivor Hele depicts Australian troops overrunning an enemy position near Tel el Eisa, September 1942*







# Stalingrad

*The battle of Stalingrad was the climax of Hitler's attempt to conquer Russia. In four months of savage hand-to-hand fighting the offensive was drained from the Nazi war machine. The initiative had passed out of Hitler's hands never to return.*

It has often been said that Stalingrad was the decisive battle, and the turning point, of the eastern campaign. And indeed a glance at the map, with some hindsight of the German plans for the summer of 1942, would seem to make this the obvious site. Yet the irony is that neither side intended, or foresaw, that the fight to the death should be there.

At the beginning of 1942 both the German Armed Forces High Command (OKW) and the Stavka (the Supreme Command of the Red Army) projected planning for the summer that grossly over-estimated

their own capabilities. In spite of the punishment they had sustained during the Soviet winter offensives (p. 1811) the Germans were confident that they could master the Red Army when the weather no longer impeded their mobility. And indeed there was some substance in this, for the terrible battles of the deep winter had been fought by a quite small proportion of the German strength which the extreme temperatures had isolated from manoeuvre

*Russians contest a few yards of rubble in the shattered streets of Stalingrad.*



or relief. More than sixty-five per cent of the infantry had never been engaged in the winter fighting, and had spent the winter in training and re-equipment.

At the nadir of German fortunes there had been voices in the German Army High Command (OKH) which had favoured retreat to the line of the Dnieper and a suspension of offensive operations for a whole twelve-month period. But with the milder weather this caution evaporated (helped, no doubt, by the wholesale dismissals which Hitler had implemented in the new year) and planning proceeded apace for the summer campaign.

In fact it was the Red Army which got off the line first, staging three separate offensives immediately after the spring thaw. The Soviet intention was to relieve Leningrad and Sebastopol, and to recapture Kharkov—objectives more ambitious even than those of mid-winter, and set, moreover, in a context of German recovery and Russian exhaustion. In the result all three failed, and with crippling casualties. The Kharkov offensive in particular had most serious consequences as it ran head-on into a strong enemy concentration deployed to eliminate the Lozovaya salient, which had been established by the Red Army in January. The Russians lost over 600 tanks and in this critical area, where the Germans had decided to concentrate their summer offensive, the ratio of armour swung from five to one in the Russian favour to nearly ten to one against them.

For the Germans then, an initial domination of the battlefield was a certainty. How they would exploit this was less definite. At least three separate operational plans existed. The most conservative, naturally, was that formulated by the OKH staff, which envisaged advancing as far east as was necessary to safeguard the mineral resources of the Donets Basin. Stalingrad was suggested as a final objective but with the escape clause that if its seizure was not possible it would be enough to 'expose it to our heavy fire, so that it loses its importance as a centre of communications'. The OKW toyed with two schemes; the first anticipated swallowing Stalingrad in the opening weeks, wheeling north up the left bank of the Volga and outflanking Moscow; the second, only slightly less grandiose, also presumed the city's early fall followed by its tenure as a 'blocking point' to cover a southward wheel into the Caucasus where the Soviet oilfields lay. General von Kleist, commanding I Panzer Group, had been personally told by Hitler as early as April that '... I and my Panzers were to be the instruments whereby the Reich would be assured of its oil supplies in perpetuity. Stalingrad was no more than a name on the map to us.'

### ***The southern offensive***

Army Group South, commanded by Field Marshal von Bock, launched its attack on 28th June. Three armies split the Russian front into fragments on either side of Kursk, and Hoth's eleven Panzer divisions fanned out across hundreds of miles of open rolling corn and steppe grass, towards Voronezh and the Don. Two days later the southern half of the army group went over to the attack below Kharkov, and Kleist took I Panzer Group across the Donets.

The Russians were outnumbered and outgunned from the start, and their shortage of armour made it difficult to mount even local counter-attacks. With each day the Russian disorder multiplied, their command structure degenerating into independent combat at divisional, then at brigade, finally at regimental level. Without even the protection of mass, which had characterized the Red Army's deployment in the Ukraine in 1941, or of swamp and forest, which had allowed small groups to delay the enemy in the battle of Moscow, these formations were at the German's mercy. Polarizing around the meagre cover of some shallow ravine or the wooden hutments of a *kolkhoz*, they fought out their last battle under a deluge of firepower against which they could oppose little save their own bravery. '... quite different from last year [wrote a sergeant in III Panzer Division]. It's more like Poland. The Russians aren't nearly so thick on the ground. They fire their guns like madmen, but they don't hurt us.'

Within a fortnight the Soviet command structure had disintegrated and on 12th July the Stavka promulgated a new 'Stalingrad front'. The title of this force (front was roughly equivalent administratively, though not necessarily in strength, to a German army group) showed that the Stavka, at least, appreciated where they must make their stand, and it was here that they were now directing their last reserves, which had been concentrated around Moscow. General Chuikov, who was to emerge as one of the vital personalities who inspired and directed the battle of Stalingrad, brought his reserve army of four infantry divisions, two motorized and two armoured brigades from Tula, a distance of 700 miles south-east. On his arrival Chuikov was given instructions so vague as to convince him that 'front HQ obviously possessed extremely limited information about the enemy, who was mentioned only in general terms'.

Chuikov has described how on his first day he was on a personal reconnaissance: 'I came across two divisional staffs... they consisted of a number of officers travelling in some three to five trucks filled to overflowing with cans of fuel. When I asked them where the Germans were, and where

they were going, they could not give me a sensible reply. It was clear that to restore to these men the faith they had lost in their own powers and to improve the fighting quality of the retreating units would not be easy.'

This was the moment which offered the Germans the best prospect of 'swallowing' Stalingrad as postulated in the wide outflanking plans of the OKW. In fact the Russian troops, though thrown into battle piecemeal as they arrived, proved just adequate to slow the German advance guard, now outrunning its supplies after an advance of 300 miles in three weeks. It took Paulus's VI Army five days to clear the Don bend, and he did not have the strength to eliminate every Soviet position in the loop of the west bank—an omission which was to have catastrophic consequences in November.

Stalingrad now began to exercise its magnetism over the whole of Army Group B (the northern section of Army Group South) and up along the chain of command to the Führer himself who moved his headquarters from Rastenburg to Vinnitsa (120 miles south-west of Kiev) on 25th August, where it remained until the end of the year. The Germans were committing themselves to the one kind of battle where their adversary held the advantage, forsaking their own enormous superiorities in firepower and mobility for a mincing machine of close combat. Hoth's Panzers were swung north, out of the steppe into the brick and concrete of the Stalingrad suburbs, and for nearly four months the city was wracked by continuous hand-to-hand fighting.

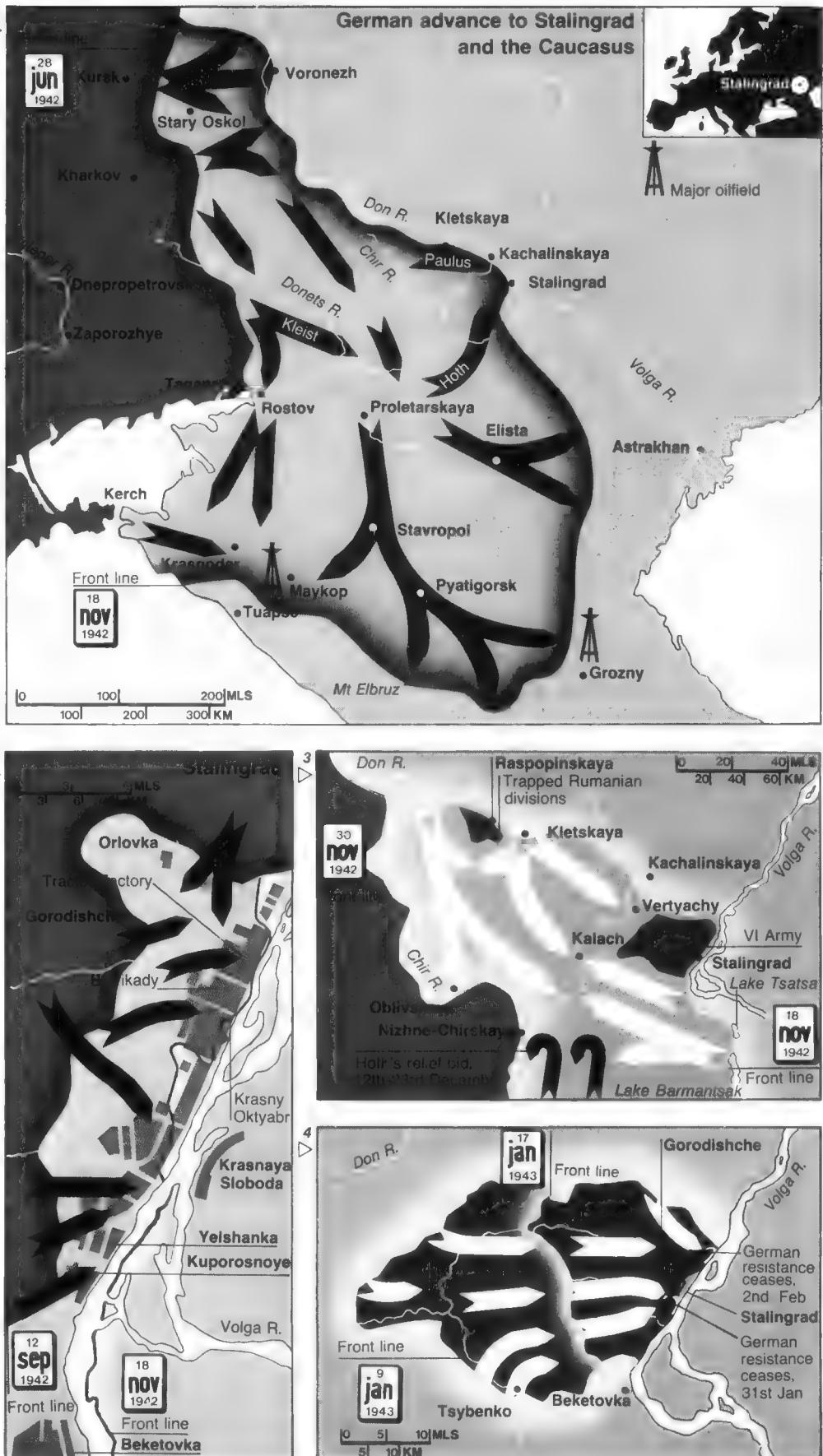
The nearest historical parallel is with the Battle of Verdun (p. 562). But there are significant differences. At Verdun the contestants rarely saw one another face to face; they were battered to death by high explosives or cut down at long range by machine-gun fire. At Stalingrad each separate battle resolved itself into a combat between individuals. Soldiers would jeer and curse at their enemy across the street; often they could hear his breathing in the next room while they reloaded; hand-to-hand duels were finished in the dark twilight of smoke and brick dust with knives and pickaxes, with clubs of rubble and twisted steel. General Doerr has described how 'the time for conducting large-scale operations was gone for ever; from the wide expanses of steppe-land the war moved into the jagged gullies of the Volga hills with their copses and ravines, into the factory area of Stalingrad, spread out over uneven, pitted, rugged country, covered with iron, concrete, and stone buildings. The mile, as a measure of distance, was replaced by the yard. GHQ's map was the map of the city.'

## Stalingrad

'For every house, workshop, water-tower, railway embankment, wall, cellar, and every pile of ruins, a bitter battle was waged, without equal even in the First World War with its vast expenditure of munitions. The distance between the enemy's army and ours was as small as it could possibly be. Despite the concentrated activity of aircraft and artillery, it was impossible to break out of the area of close fighting. The Russians surpassed the Germans in their use of the terrain and in camouflage and were more experienced in barricade warfare for individual buildings.'

In the first week of September Hoth's tanks, operating in the southern sector, broke through to the Volga bank and split the Russians into two. A critical four-day period followed, with the defenders of the northern half outnumbered three to one, and the Germans got close enough to bring the central landing stage (where the Volga ferries landed supplies for the defending forces) under machine-gun fire. But the sheer tenacity and individual courage of the Russian foot-soldier was the deciding factor. General Paulus's offensive subsided, fought to a standstill.

It was now plain that a major strategic revision was called for. But the Germans were prisoners of their own propaganda, which had steadily been building up the importance of the battle. Any misgivings that Paulus himself may have felt were quietened by a visit from General Schmundt, formerly Hitler's adjutant and now chief of the Army Personnel Office. Schmundt strongly hinted that Paulus was being considered for 'a most senior post' (in fact the succession to Jodl as Chief of the Armed Forces Operational Staff), but that the Führer was most anxious first to see the Stalingrad operations 'brought to a successful conclusion'. Paulus's awareness of his own interests was, at all times, keener than his tactical abilities. This time he decided to strike head-on at his enemy's strongest point—the three giant edifices of the Tractor Factory, the Barrikady (Barricades) ordnance plant, and the Krasny Oktyabr (Red October) steel works, which lay in the northern half of the city, ranged one after another a few hundred yards from the Volga bank. This was to be the fiercest, and the longest, of the five battles which were fought in the ruined town, and that which finally drained the offensive strength from the German armies in south Russia. It started on 4th October and raged for nearly three weeks. Paulus had been reinforced by a variety of different specialist troops, including police batta-



1 The German advance. 2 The German assault on Stalingrad. 3 Red Army counter-attacks. 4 The crushing of VI Army

lions and engineers skilled in street fighting and demolition work. But the Russians, though still heavily outnumbered, remained their masters in the technique of house-to-house fighting. They had perfected the use of 'shock groups', small bodies of mixed arms—light and heavy machine-guns, tommy gunners, and grenadiers usually with anti-tank guns, who gave one another support in lightning counter-attacks; and they had developed the creation of 'killing zones', houses and squares heavily mined, to which the defenders knew all the approach routes, where the German advance could be canalized.

Slowly and at a tremendous price the Germans inched their way into the great buildings, across factory floors; around and over the inert machinery, through the foundries, the assembly shops, the offices. 'My God, why have you forsaken us?' wrote a lieutenant of XXIV Panzer Division. 'We have fought during fifteen days for a single house, with mortars, grenades, machine-guns, and bayonets. Already by the third day fifty-four German corpses lay strewn in the cellars, on the landings, and the staircases. The front is a corridor between burnt-out rooms; it is the thin ceiling between two floors. Help comes from neighbouring houses by fire escapes and chimneys. There is a ceaseless struggle from noon till night. From storey to storey, faces black with sweat, we bombard each other with grenades in the middle of explosions, clouds of dust and smoke, heaps of mortar, floods of blood, fragments of furniture and human beings. Ask any soldier what half an hour of hand-to-hand struggle means in such a fight. And imagine Stalingrad; eighty days and eighty nights of hand-to-hand struggles. The street is no longer measured by metres but by corpses . . . Stalingrad is no longer a town. By day it is an enormous cloud of burning blinding smoke; it is a vast furnace, lit by the reflection of the flames. And when the night arrives, one of those scorching, howling, bleeding nights, the dogs plunge into the Volga and swim desperately to gain the other bank. The nights of Stalingrad are a terror for them. Animals flee this hell; the hardest stones cannot bear it for long; only men endure.'

By the end of October the Russian positions at Stalingrad had been reduced to a few pockets of stone, seldom more than three hundred yards deep, bordering on the right bank of the Volga. The Krasny Oktyabr had fallen to the Germans who had paved every metre of the factory floor with their dead. The Barrikady was half lost, with Germans at one end of the foundry facing Russian machine-guns in the extinct ovens at the other. The defenders of the Tractor Factory had been split into three.

#### **Zhukov counter-attacks**

But these last islets of resistance, hardened in the furnace of repeated attacks, were irreducible. Paulus's VI Army was spent, as exhausted as Haig's divisions at Passchendaele had been exactly a quarter of a century before. And all the time, to the north and west, a terrible storm was gathering. Early in September the Stavka had sent Zhukov—architect of their winter victory at Moscow—to the southern theatre and with him Zhukov had brought his colleagues Novikov and Voronov, the artillery specialist. For two months Zhukov carefully built up his reserves on the German flank and reinforced the Don bridgeheads against the Rumanians defending the German northern flank. Of twenty-two fresh infantry divisions created during this period only two were committed in Stalingrad itself. Virtually the entire autumn tank production was held back for use in the counter-offensive.

Paulus's Intelligence had warned him that something was afoot, but both Luftwaffe and army had grossly under-estimated its scale. The XLVIII Panzer Corps, VI Army's sole mobile reserve, consisted of ninety-two Czech light tanks, with Rumanian crews, and the remains of XIV Panzer Division refitting after five weeks continuous action in the rubble of Stalingrad. Against this, on 19th November, Zhukov threw six fresh armies, 450 new T34 tanks, and an artillery barrage from over 2,000 guns, in a pincer movement that converged on either side of the German salient whose tip was at Stalingrad.

The staff of VI Army went sleepless for two nights as they struggled to regroup the precious Panthers and pull back their infantry from the smoking maze of Stalingrad to protect the collapsing flanks. In the rear confusion was absolute: the western railway from Kalach had already been cut by Russian cavalry in several places; the sound of firing came from every direction, and periodically broke out between Germans going up to the front and ragged groups of Rumanians in leaderless retreat. The huge bridge at Kalach over which every pound of rations and every bullet for VI Army passed, had been prepared for demolition, and a platoon of engineers was on duty there all day on 23rd November in case the order to destroy the bridge should come through. At half past four that afternoon tanks could be heard approaching from the west. The lieutenant in charge of the engineers thought at first that they might be Russians but was reassured when the first three vehicles were identified as Horch personnel carriers with XXII Panzer Division markings; assuming that it was a reinforcement column for Stalingrad he instructed his men to lift the barrier. The personnel carriers halted on the bridge and

disgorged sixty Russian tommy-gunners who killed most of the engineer platoon and took the survivors prisoner. They removed the demolition charges and twenty-five tanks from the column passed over the bridge and drove south-east, where that evening they made contact with the southern claw of the pincer, 14th Independent Tank Brigade from Trufanov's 51st Army. The first tenuous link in a chain that was to throttle a quarter of a million German soldiers had been forged, and the turning point in the Second World War had arrived.

In the three days following their penetration of the Rumanian corps, the Russians had moved thirty-four divisions across the Don, twelve from Beketonskaya bridgehead and twenty-two from Kremenskaya. Their tanks had turned westward, defeating XLVIII Panzer Corps and probing dangerously into the confusion of stragglers, service and training units, and mutinous satellites who milled about in the German rear. Their infantry had turned east, digging with feverish energy to build an iron ring around VI Army. Zhukov kept the whole of the Stalingrad pocket under bombardment from heavy guns sited on the far bank of the Volga, but for the first few days he had exerted only a gentle pressure upon the surrounded Germans.

The Soviets' intention was to probe in sufficient strength to be able to detect the first signs of their enemy's actually striking camp, but to avoid any action which might precipitate this. For them, as for Paulus, these first hours were vital. All night on 23rd and during the morning of 24th November, men and tractors hauled and struggled with battery after battery of 76-mm guns across the frozen earth. By that evening Russian firepower on the west side of the pocket had trebled. Over a thousand anti-tank guns were in position in an arc from Vertyatchy, in the north, around to Kalach, then eastwards below Marinovka, joining the Volga at the old Beketonskaya bridgehead.

Field-Marshal von Manstein, the newly appointed commander of the German army group, set about preparing a relief operation, using the rump of Hoth's Panthers that had been left out of the encirclement, and some mobile units pulled back from the Caucasus. However, Russian pressure and administrative difficulties delayed the counter-attack (Operation Winter Tempest) until 12th December. Hoth's column was never strong enough to penetrate the Soviet ring on its own, and a simultaneous full-scale sortie by Paulus's force on the code signal *Donnerschlag*—'Thunderclap'—was to be vital to its success. When it came to the point Paulus refused to move, making a succession of excuses and finally referring Manstein to Hitler. Hitler, over the telephone, said he had to leave it to



Paulus. With the overall position deteriorating daily it was impossible to keep Hoth's column poised in the steppe for long and over Christmas it withdrew, carrying with it the last prospects of relief for the beleaguered army.

Stalingrad was the greatest single defeat suffered by German arms since the Napoleonic Wars. To this day it is impossible to make a final assessment of the failure to relieve the surrounded army because all the surviving participants are inhibited, for one or another reason, from giving an impartial account. Russian strength was, of course, a primary factor. Also contributory was the misrepresentation by the Luftwaffe of its ability to supply VI Army (incredibly Göring assumed that the He 111, which could carry 2,000 kilogrammes of explosive could as easily load 2,000 kilogrammes of cargo). But the real mystery is a strategic one. There was a widespread conviction that the Stalingrad garrison must stay where it was in order to cover the retreat of the rest of the army. Manstein himself is on record with the view that 'if the enemy siege forces had been released . . . the fate of the whole southern wing of the German forces in the East would have been sealed.' It was impossible to recommend that Paulus should be sacrificed to this end—easy to take comfort (as Paulus himself was doing) from the fact that many, weaker 'pockets' had held out through the previous winter until the thaw had brought relief.

At all events, the revictualling of so large a garrison was quite beyond the powers of the Luftwaffe even while its forward airfields were safe. Once these were lost to the Russian advance the garrison's life could be measured in weeks. VI Army rejected a surrender demand on 10th January and defeated the last Russian attack. On 2nd February the last remnants of the garrison were obliged by shortage of food and ammunition to surrender. Over 130,000 men went into the prison cages and German strength in the East was never to recover.

**Left:** Russian soldiers emerge from hiding in a ruined house, October 1942.  
**Right:** 1 After the Soviet counter-attack—men of VI Army crouch in the snow. In November the Red Army surrounded a quarter of a million men at Stalingrad. By 2nd February half of them were dead. 2 Field-Marshal Paulus at his interrogation by the Russians. After his capture he became an active member of the anti-Nazi 'Free Officers' Committee' and broadcast from Moscow. 3 General Chuykov, commander of 62nd Army which defended Stalingrad. 4 Soviet poster, 1942: 'We will defend Mother Volga'. They did—the Germans never managed to cross



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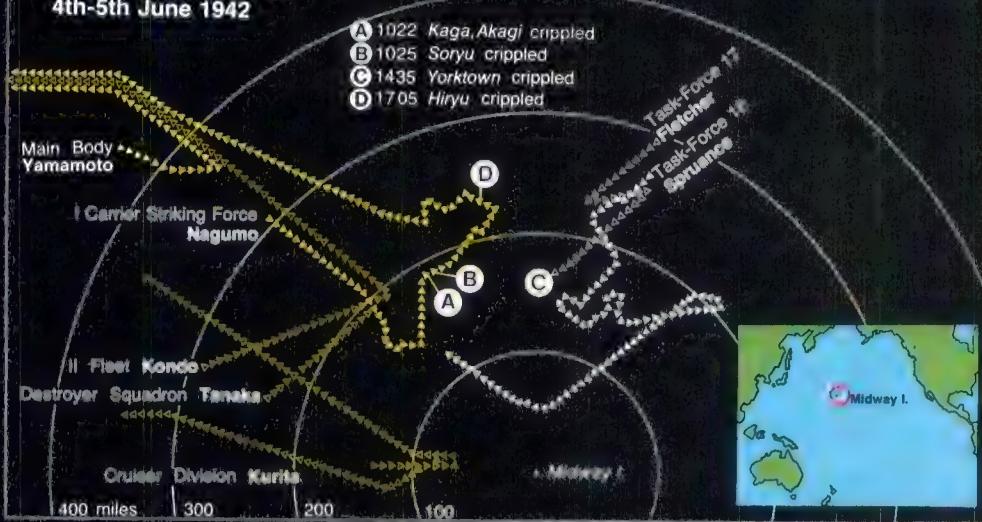


4



#### The course of the fleets

##### The Battle of Midway, 4th-5th June 1942



For many years Japanese naval strategists had prepared for a 'decisive fleet action' with the Americans in the Pacific and at Midway in early June 1942 they hoped to destroy the surviving vessels of the US Pacific Fleet in such an encounter. Admiral Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, was convinced that a threat to Midway, and therefore to Hawaii, would compel the weak enemy fleet to challenge overwhelming Japanese forces under whose guns and bombs, he imagined, it could not survive. He also planned to seize Midway as an advance air base and assault the western Aleutians to distract American forces from his central objective, that of eliminating US naval power in the Pacific.

But the Japanese were arrogant and over-confident, scattering their forces in a defective, diffuse, and

over-complicated operational plan which, through a singular feat of code-breaking, was known to the US Navy. Moreover, they reckoned without the skill and self-sacrifice of a handful of American pilots.

1: At 0430, 107 Japanese torpedo-bombers, dive-bombers, and fighters are launched from the carriers Kaga, Akagi, Soryu, and Hiryu of I Carrier Striking Force. At 0634 they attack Midway. Of twenty-five fighters sent up to oppose them, only two survive.

2: Twenty-six Midway-based dive-bombers, torpedo-bombers, and bombers swoop on the Japanese carriers at 0705. They fail to score a single hit. Only nine aircraft return. A strike by eleven slower dive-bombers at 0817 proves similarly ineffective and costly.

5



3: Thirty-five dive-bombers led by Lieutenant-Commanders Leslie and McClusky from Task Forces 16 and 17 (Yorktown and Enterprise) pounce on Akagi, Soryu, and Kaga at 1025 and cripple them. The carriers, their decks crowded with aircraft, had not detected the approaching Americans as they had been preoccupied with mauling a force of forty-one unescorted American torpedo-bombers.

4: At 1435 sixteen Japanese dive-bombers and fighters from Hiryu launch a second strike on Yorktown (Task Force 17), dooming it. Only seven aircraft survive the raid. Fire-racked Akagi and Soryu drift aimlessly.

5: Shortly after 1700 twenty-four dive-bombers from

# The Battle of Midway

*The Battle of Midway was 'the first really smashing defeat inflicted on the Japanese navy in modern times'. Here a Japanese historian gives an account of the battle – and shows just how lucky the Americans were*

After 1918 the Japanese navy regarded the United States as its most probable enemy, and consequently maintained an up-to-date and highly trained fleet. To a dispassionate observer, however, it was clear that Japan's geographical position, the size of her armed forces, and above all the disparity between her total resources and those of the United States gave her a poor chance of achieving final victory in any war with America.

But when war between the two countries became inevitable in 1941 the Japanese navy, for all its slender hopes of success, found itself in the front rank confronting the American navy.

The dilemma facing the strategists of the Imperial Japanese Headquarters was that until the occupation of the southern territories with their vast resources was completed they neither wanted to face an attack from the American fleet, nor entanglement in a protracted war. Although the Japanese navy and US Pacific Fleet were more or less evenly balanced in 1941, the Japanese had a greater number of aircraft-carriers, and because of the demands of the 'China Incident' (p. 1612), possessed pilots who were both experienced and highly trained. But it was certain that these advantages would promptly be nullified if America mobilized her massive productive strength and directed it to wartime production. What would happen, it was asked, if America was to wait until her crushingly superior forces were fully equipped, and then attempt to decide the issue with a single attack on Japan? To eliminate this possibility it was necessary, by a positive and continuous offensive, to force America into decisive battles at an early date, to destroy the main strength of her fleet, and to build up 'conditions for protracted warfare from an invincible position' by turning the resources of the southern territories to military purposes.

It was from this standpoint, too, that Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, planned the attack on Pearl Harbour (p. 1827) in December 1941, and persuaded the Naval General Staff, who had opposed the plan as being too risky, to accept it.

#### *Yamamoto stands firm*

Possible future objectives the following year included Australia, Ceylon, Hawaii, Fiji, and Samoa but opinions differed as to the advisability of selecting targets among

them. Moreover, the army was inclined to favour a withdrawal of land forces to Manchuria after the operations in the south in order to take the opportunity of combining with the German army in a double attack on Russia. Since it showed no enthusiasm for expanding the war on the Pacific front, and was hesitant about providing troops, plans for the second phase of the war had to be kept within the bounds of what naval forces alone could accomplish.

Yamamoto's plan for the Midway operation was put before the General Staff at the beginning of April, when discussions about strategy for the second phase of the war were already in their final stages. The primary object of the operation was to lure out and then destroy the US Pacific Fleet. This was to be achieved by attacking and occupying the solitary Pacific island of Midway, which served as an outpost for Hawaii, thus quickly forcing America into a major battle. At the same time it was planned to extend the defence perimeter in anticipation of American air attacks on the Japanese mainland by occupying the Aleutian Islands.

The Naval General Staff also accepted that it was desirable to involve the United States in a decisive battle as soon as possible, but it did not consider Midway, so close to Hawaii, an advantageous location for a major battle, or a suitable area into which to lure the American aircraft-carriers. It strongly advocated cutting the lines of communication between the United States and Australia by advancing on Fiji and Samoa which were about the same distance away as the Japanese outpost of Truk in the Caroline Islands. Nor were the Naval General Staff the only opponents of the Midway operation. II Fleet, which was to support the occupation forces, was opposed to it on the grounds that it was not ready; IV Fleet, which was to look after the logistical problems following the occupation, objected to it on the grounds that it could not be confident of fulfilling this role even if the operation was successful. In particular, I Air Fleet, which had arrived back in Japan in the middle of April following operations in the Indian Ocean, was anxious to postpone the operation so as to allow some time for rest and re-equipment.

But Admiral Yamamoto was firm in his resolution and the Naval General Staff eventually gave in to the Combined Fleet, as it had done before.

Just at this point, on 18th April, sixteen B-25 Mitchell bombers, led by Lieutenant-Colonel James Doolittle, took off from Vice-

Task Force 16 attack *Hiryū*. Four bombs land near the bridge and cripple the carrier. *Yorktown*, dead in the water, is attended by her screening force.

**The course of the fleets:** fleet movement between 2400 on 3rd June and 2400 on 4th June. Apart from *Mikuma* of Kurita's Cruiser Division which was attacked by Midway-based bombers on 5th June, the remaining forces took no part in the action. Yamamoto's Main Body cruised hundreds of miles from the carriers, depriving them of anti-aircraft protection and him of any opportunity for night action. *Soryū* sank at 1913 and *Kaga* at 1925. *Akagi* was scuttled at 0455 on 5th June and at approximately 0915 *Hiryū* went down. *Yorktown*, which remained afloat, was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on 6th June.

*The Battle of Midway, 4th-5th June 1942. It restored the balance between the American and Japanese navies in the Pacific*

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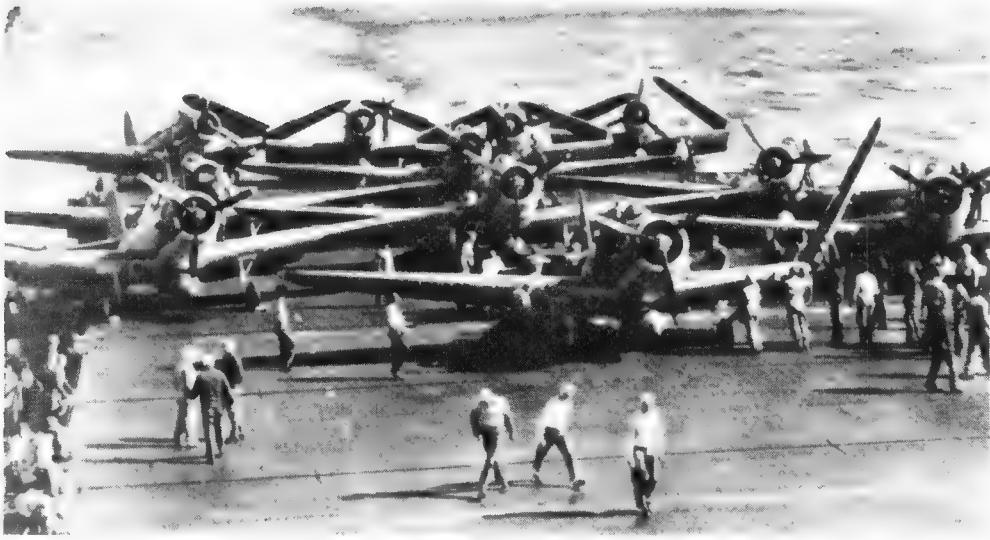


William Green

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US Air Force

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1 Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter. During the Battle of Midway Zeros swept away attacks on their aircraft-carriers, slaughtering the lumbering Devastators of Torpedo Squadron 8. In the early part of the war the Zero was faster and more manoeuvrable than any opposing Allied aircraft. 2 Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief US Pacific Fleet. He concluded correctly that Japan's objectives were Midway and the Aleutians and he decided to concentrate all his forces on the defence of Midway. 3 Devastators of Torpedo Squadron 6

Admiral Halsey's aircraft-carriers *Enterprise* and *Hornet* and carried out a surprise bombing attack on Tokyo. Damage was slight, but the psychological shock of this first air-raid on Japan itself was very great, and when the case for extending the defence perimeter to Midway and the Aleutians was again proposed, this time much more strongly, opposition to it melted away at once. Preparations for a major assault by almost the whole of the Japanese navy went forward with all speed, and the army, until now a mere onlooker, contributed one infantry regiment.

The second phase of the war was to proceed with the occupation of Port Moresby in early May, the occupation of Midway and the Aleutians in early June, and the occupation of New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa in July. On the 5th May Imperial General Headquarters ordered the occupation of Midway and the Aleutians.

#### **Unlearned lessons**

The forces taking part were almost the full strength of the Combined Fleet, including eleven battleships, eight aircraft-carriers, twenty-one cruisers and more than 200 other ships, together with 500 planes and 6,000 marines and soldiers. The plan was for this vast fleet to set out at different times and from different places in either nine or eleven groups with the

object of attacking and occupying Midway and the Aleutians.

From some points of view this plan was a subtle and artistic one, but at the same time it revealed characteristic shortcomings in the Japanese navy, and Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet, later criticized it for both attempting to lure the US Pacific Fleet into a decisive battle and seeking the occupation of Midway. He also criticized the multiplicity of divisions within the forces needed to execute it. Admiral Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, who had overall command of the operation, was to be aboard the newly-constructed Combined Fleet flagship *Yamato*, the world's biggest battleship, in company with eight battleships drawn from the Main Body of the Main Force, the Main Force's Guard Force, and Rear-Admiral Abe's Support Group. They were to advance 600 nautical miles (this was later revised to 300 nautical miles) behind Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force. As *Yamato* was obliged to maintain strict radio silence, it was hardly to be expected that there could be adequate leadership. Yamamoto was well-known as the foster-father of the Naval Air Corps, and had been quick to attach great importance to aircraft and aircraft-carriers. His foresight had already been proved by Japanese suc-

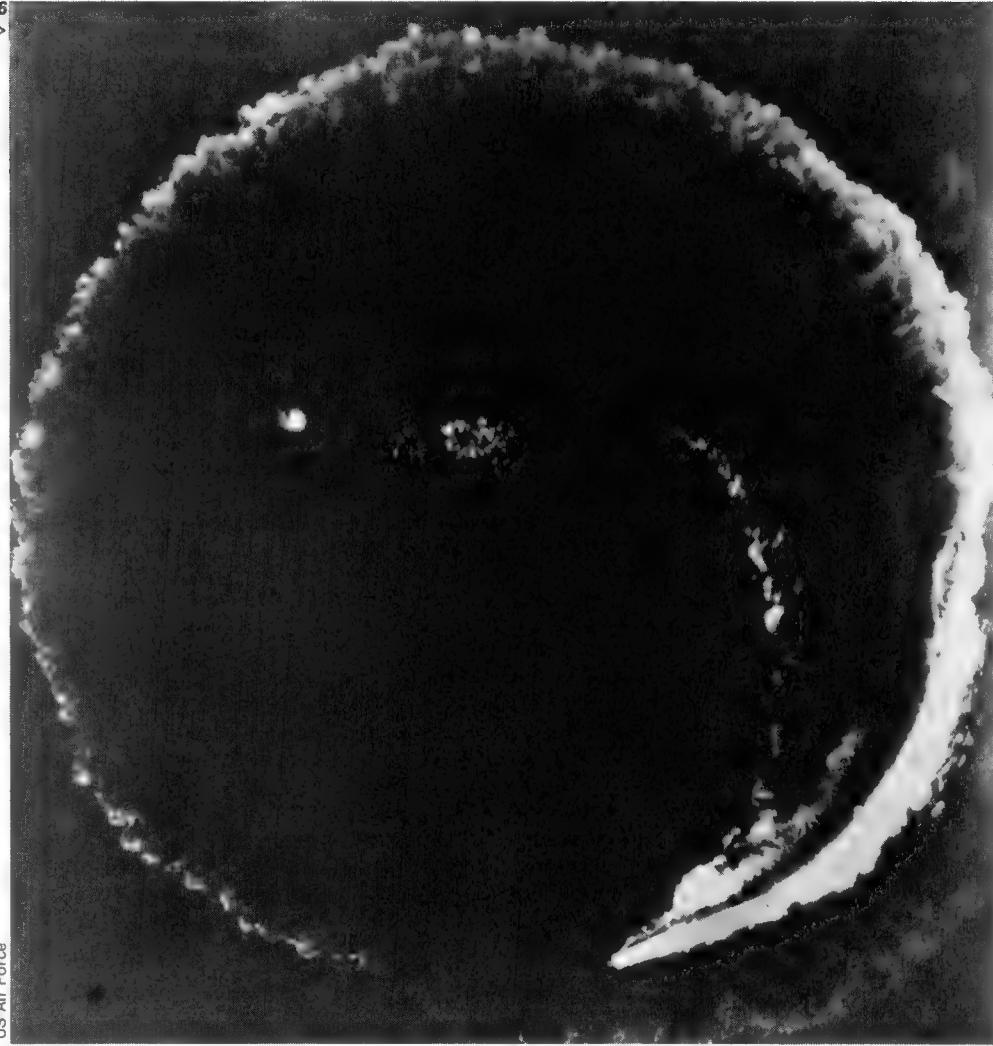
cesses in the opening days of the war. But now Yamamoto was compromising with the conservative advocates of the big ships and the big guns, possibly with the idea of letting the battleship fleet have some of the glory for the expected victory.

The main striking power undoubtedly lay with Vice-Admiral Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force consisting of the aircraft-carriers *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu*, and *Hiryu* and whether or not the task-force was successful it seemed unlikely that there would be any opportunity to use the battleships' big guns, with their maximum range of forty nautical miles. In fact the young officers of Nagumo's force suggested sarcastically that the battleship fleet was going to hold a naval review in the Pacific. It is now accepted that, mainly due to the relaxed atmosphere resulting from Japan's string of initial victories and an underestimation of the enemy's strength, secrecy was not strictly maintained, intelligence reports were inadequate, instructions were not followed as carefully as they should have been, and tactical preparations in general were insufficient and left too late.

April's operations in the Indian Ocean together with the Battle of the Coral Sea in May had provided a number of valuable lessons about the weaknesses of reconnaissance work and aircraft-carrier vulnerability which should have been taken



US Air Force



US Air Force

prepare to take off from Enterprise. Only four came back. But the torpedo squadrons from Yorktown and Hornet suffered even greater losses. 4 Rear-Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, commander of Task Force 16. He decided to time his attack for the moment when the Japanese aircraft would have returned from Midway. 5 Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet. By attacking Midway he wanted to lure out and destroy the US Pacific Fleet. 6 Soryu makes a full circle at high speed in an attempt to evade attack

into consideration as a matter of course when the Midway operation was planned, but which, in fact, were largely ignored. A particularly interesting point was that the Battle of the Coral Sea was the first ever important battle in naval history in which aircraft-carriers opposed aircraft-carriers. The opposing forces, the Japanese V Carrier Division under Rear-Admiral Chuichi Hara containing the aircraft-carriers *Shokaku* and *Zuikaku*, and Task Force 17 containing the two American carriers *Lexington* and *Yorktown*, under the command of Rear-Admiral Frank Fletcher, were more or less evenly matched. Tactically speaking, it could be called a Japanese victory since the *Lexington* was sunk and the *Yorktown* damaged, but the Americans achieved their aim in preventing the occupation of Port Moresby. Moreover, although the Japanese carriers did make their way back to Japan, they had suffered such severe losses in combat-ready pilots that they were unable to take part in the battle of Midway, whereas the *Yorktown* returned quickly to Hawaii, underwent emergency repairs, and left again for the battle area. The Combined Fleet put down the 'unsatisfactory result' of the battle to the imperfect discipline of the recently-formed V Carrier Division, and did not attempt to analyse the nature of engagements between aircraft-carriers.

The US Navy had lost most of its battleship fleet at Pearl Harbour, but two large, fast aircraft-carriers had escaped. The traditional notion of battleship supremacy was no less firmly rooted in the US Navy than in the Japanese navy, but the former had lost their battleships and had been obliged to alter their tactics to make the aircraft-carriers the centrepieces of their strategy. From the beginning of 1942 two aircraft-carrier groups, under the command of Admirals Halsey and Fletcher, had carried out bold surprise hit and run attacks on Japan's peripheral defence-line timed to avoid confrontation with Nagumo's task-force. In February they had struck at the Marshall Islands, in March at Lae in Papua, and in May at Tulagi in the Solomon Islands.

#### ***The code-breakers***

But the only aircraft-carriers Admiral Nimitz could muster for the defence of Midway were *Enterprise*, *Hornet*, and *Yorktown*. Their chances of successfully resisting a direct confrontation with the six large and four small Japanese aircraft-carriers, superior both in the power of their aircraft and the training of their crews, seemed slight. However, at the same time the US Navy had in its hands an invaluable weapon, which proved the key to victory—namely the expertise of their

intelligence service, and especially of their cryptographers. Before the outbreak of war the American code-breaking experts using their so-called 'Magic' system had succeeded in decoding the Japanese Foreign Ministry machine cypher, which proved of advantage to the Americans in conducting negotiations with Japan. In the spring of 1942 the code-breaking group from the Pacific Fleet, under the direction of Commander Rochefort, gradually, by dint of hard work, managed to break the main strategic code used by the Japanese navy. As a result they were able to alert Task Forces 11 and 17 just in time to frustrate the occupation of Port Moresby in the Coral Sea.

The first hints of the Midway operation began to appear in code messages in late April and early May, but until about 10th May Nimitz's headquarters were still tending to think that the next Japanese objective would probably be Fiji and Samoa. On 14th May Nimitz collated all his reports, which were based mainly on the decoded messages, and concluded correctly that Japan's objectives were Midway and the Aleutians. He decided to concentrate all his forces on the defence of Midway, and hurriedly ordered the strengthening of the island's garrison and additions to its defence facilities and fortifications. In addition, three submarine patrol arcs

were set up at a distance of 100, 150, and 200 miles from Midway, with a total of twenty submarines on stations by 4th June. Moreover, Pacific Fleet Headquarters urgently ordered Task Forces 16 (grouped around *Hornet* and *Enterprise*) and 17 (including damaged *Yorktown*) to return at once to Pearl Harbour from the southwest Pacific. The defence of Dutch Harbour was to be the responsibility of a new fleet under Rear-Admiral Theobald.

Vice-Admiral William Halsey was now in hospital, and Rear-Admiral Raymond Spruance had replaced him as commander of Task Force 16, composed of *Enterprise*, *Hornet*, six cruisers, and nine destroyers, which sailed from Pearl Harbour on 28th May. Task Force 17, comprising *Yorktown*, whose damage was actually repaired in three days rather than in the estimated three months, plus two cruisers and five destroyers under the command of Rear-Admiral Frank Fletcher, left Pearl Harbour on 30th May. The two fleets met at 'Point Luck', about 325 nautical miles north-east of Midway, on the evening of 2nd June, and waited for the Japanese to attack. Since the end of May Catalina flying-boats, deployed at Midway, had been spreading a fine net of observation flights over a 700-mile radius around the island.

The attacking Japanese navy was also doing its best to collect reports. On 18th May a patrolling flying-boat spotted Halsey's two aircraft-carriers to the east of the Solomons archipelago, but thereafter no further reports of US aircraft-carriers were made. However, it was thought highly probable that they were in port at Pearl Harbour. On the basis of this supposition a second flying-boat reconnaissance was planned. An 'Emily' flying-boat, with its vaunted range of 4,000 nautical miles, was to take off from its base in the Marshall Islands, and, after stopping to refuel from a submarine at French Frigate Shoals, was to arrive over Hawaii during the night of 30th May. The mission had to be abandoned, however, when it was discovered that the shoals were already being used by the US Navy as a seaplane base. Moreover, submarines arriving at the north and south ends of the Hawaiian archipelago on 3rd June were too late to sight the two US aircraft-carriers.

On 26th May Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force left the Bungo Strait and two days later the Main Body, the Midway invasion force Main Body, and the Guard Force followed. On 27th May the Transport Group sailed from Saipan towards the battle-area in the central Pacific. The whole fleet had maintained absolute radio silence, but immediately signs appeared which augured ill for its hopes of achieving a surprise attack. US submarines off the Bungo Strait and Saipan sent long radio

code messages directly after the Japanese fleets had left these points, which were intercepted. Furthermore, two Japanese ships lost their way in fog and broke the radio silence, and it was assumed that their messages must have been picked up by the Americans. On 1st June the number of messages sent to the Hawaii area, including a good many urgent messages, increased sharply, and the commanding officers of the Combined Fleet decided that their movements were already known to the Americans. Rear-Admiral Ugaki, Combined Fleet Chief of Staff, noted in his diary: 'This should do us no harm. It will give us a bigger prize to fight for'. On the evening of the 3rd the cruiser *Tone* spotted 'enemy flying-boats', but the fighter aircraft sent up from the *Akagi* to intercept lost them in the clouds.

All these alarms were in fact no more than groundless fears originating with the Japanese themselves. The Americans had not in fact made any contact, and Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force, which was hidden in the sense that it was out in front, was not spotted by American reconnaissance aircraft until early on the 4th June, the first day of the battle. Luck had not yet deserted the Japanese navy in the war.

### *The electrifying message*

The final, decisive warning was sounded on 2nd June. On that date VI Fleet's interception unit on Kwajalein atoll detected messages being passed between what appeared to be two US aircraft-carriers, which suggested that the ships were at sea to the north-west of Midway Island. This information was passed on immediately to the whole fleet, but Nagumo's force, out in front, paid no attention. It, moreover, decided that the 'flying-boats' supposed to have been sighted on the evening of the 3rd had in fact been birds. I Carrier Striking Force still had confidence in its surprise attack scheduled for the following day.

The operation began on the morning of 3rd June with an aerial attack on Dutch Harbour by aircraft from II Carrier Striking Force under the command of Rear-Admiral Kakuta. To create a diversion and distract attention from Midway the Japanese navy arranged a simultaneous surprise attack on Sydney and Diego Suarez in Madagascar with special midget submarines, but as a result of reports extracted from decoded messages Admiral Nimitz was able to grasp almost every aspect of the Japanese plan.

On the same day a section of the Transport Group which had proceeded ahead of schedule was spotted by a patrolling Catalina plane, and the upshot was that one tanker was damaged in a torpedo attack the same evening.

At 0430 the following day, the 4th, Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force arrived on schedule at a point 240 nautical miles north-west of Midway Island and the first attack wave, made up of thirty-six Nakajima B5N2s ('Kates'), thirty-six Aichi D3A2s ('Vals'), and thirty-six Zeros, took off to attack the island. The second attack wave, composed as the first, waited on the carriers' flight decks prepared for the appearance of enemy forces on the horizon.

As has already been stated, the chief purpose of the operation was to lure the American Pacific Fleet to destruction. But although I Carrier Division carried out a reconnaissance sweep that morning, there was a conviction that it would reveal no cause for uneasiness. This attitude of the General Staff, reflected in the movements of the reconnaissance planes, was a fatal weakness in the operation. At the same time as the first Midway attack set out, seven search aircraft took off to make a 300 nautical mile fan-shaped reconnaissance, but the heavy cruiser *Chikuma*'s seaplane which must have come close to passing directly above the US task-force at about 0630, not only failed to spot it, but also failed to report the important fact, indicating as it did the presence of an enemy aircraft-carrier, that the aircraft had encountered and engaged a Dauntless dive-bomber from the *Yorktown*. The *Tone*'s machine was assigned a course south of the *Chikuma*'s seaplane but because of a catapult fault its take-off was delayed for thirty minutes. However, at 0728 on its return flight it reported sighting 'what appears to be ten enemy surface ships'. This was Task Force 16, which had sent up aircraft at 0700 for an attack on Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force after a Catalina plane had spotted it at 0534. But because of the clear visibility and the presence of enemy aircraft the *Tone*'s seaplane at first hesitated to move in close above the enemy fleet. It turned away, but at 0747 the General Staff of I Carrier Division demanded: 'Ascertain types of ships'. The seaplane flew in close and at 0807 radioed 'five cruisers and five destroyers'. Thirteen minutes later it sent the electrifying message: 'Enemy force accompanied by what appears to be aircraft-carrier bringing up the rear.'

But when the first message came in from the seaplane, Nagumo's force was being attacked by aircraft from Midway. However, without fighter cover the series of attacks by B-17s, B-26s, Avengers, Vindicators, and Dauntlesses of the army, navy, and marine corps were in vain. The aircraft were swept away by Zeros and failed to score a single hit.

Further evidence of the manoeuvrability of the Zeros was provided during the Midway strike between 0630 and 0710. The US defences, alerted by radar an hour before,

sent up twenty-six Grumman Wildcats and Brewster Buffaloes to intercept the Japanese attackers. However, seventeen of the defenders were shot down, and a further seven damaged beyond repair. Japanese losses in the first wave attack were negligible. Three Kates and one Val were shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire, and only two fighters failed to return. But Lieutenant Tomonaga, the leader of the attack, realized that the defences had been strengthened beyond what they had been led to expect and at 0700 radioed Admiral Nagumo: 'There is need for a second attack.'

There had been no report so far from the reconnaissance aircraft, so the General Staff, confident that there was no US fleet in the vicinity, decided that the second attack wave, which was waiting on the flight decks, should head for Midway, and at 0715 gave the order that the torpedo-laden Kates on *Akagi* and *Kaga* should be de-armed and re-loaded with bombs. After the seaplane's sighting of a US carrier a

message came by blinker signal from Rear-Admiral Yamaguchi, commander of II Carrier Division: 'Consider it advisable to launch attack force immediately'. Even though the torpedo-bombers were not yet ready, he wanted the dive-bombers dispatched immediately to bomb the US carrier. But Nagumo, who had witnessed the slaughter of the unescorted US bombers and torpedo-planes, decided on the advice of Commander Minoru Genda, of the aviation staff, to follow the orthodox line of recovering both the Midway strike aircraft and the second wave fighters which were now on combat air patrol and sending them as escort for the Kates and Vals.

#### *Slaughter of the Devastators*

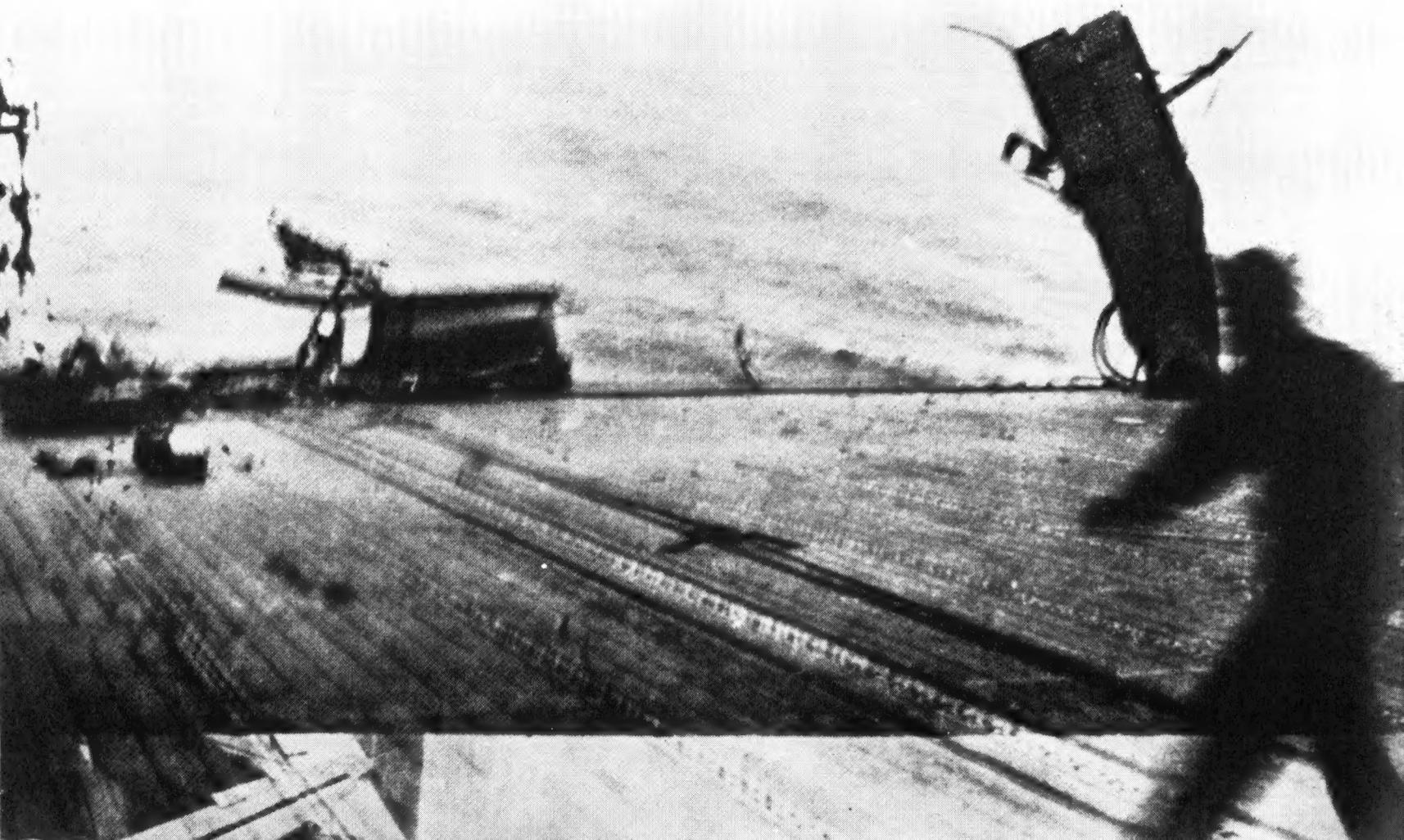
At 0745 Nagumo ordered that the aircraft which had already taken on bomb loads should start exchanging them once again for torpedoes. In the small hangars maintenance crews worked desperately. If Nagumo had realized it would take two hours before the strike-force was ready, no doubt he would unhesitatingly have followed the timely advice given him by Rear-Admiral Yamaguchi. But misfortunes occurred one after another to retard the preparations. At 0830 the first attack wave

returned from Midway and began circling, waiting for permission to land. The landings were completed by 0918, and it was calculated that it would be 1030 before the attack squadron, now re-equipped with torpedoes, would have replaced the incoming aircraft on the flight decks and be ready for take-off.

At 0905 a message from the *Tone*'s seaplane stated that a large fleet of US torpedo aircraft was on its way towards Nagumo's fleet. All the commanding officers of the I Air Fleet were on edge, but by now there was no time to regret taking the wrong decision. The only possible thing to be done was urgently to press on preparing the aircraft for take-off in time to meet the large fleet of US aircraft. The commanders turned their ships from a south-easterly course to a north-easterly one to meet the oncoming attack, and officers fiercely urged on their men.

When the news came through from a Catalina on the same morning that Nagumo's I Carrier Striking Force had been spotted, the two US task forces were 240 nautical miles east-north-east of the Japanese fleet. At that time the radius of activity of the US torpedo aircraft was not more than 175 nautical miles, so that 0900

*Moment of impact on Yorktown. The blast of a torpedo which has just crashed into her side hurls the port side catwalk into the air as a crewman crosses the deck*



US Air Force



*Yorktown listing heavily to port after attack by Japanese aircraft from *Hiryu*. She was finished off by a Japanese submarine, I-168*

was the earliest that the ships could reach their launching point. Rear-Admiral Spruance, however, knew that the Japanese had begun their bombing attack on Midway, and decided to time his attack for the moment when the Japanese aircraft would have just returned from their raid and would therefore be at their most vulnerable. He therefore launched his attack planes at 0700, two hours ahead of schedule. 116 aircraft took off from *Enterprise* and *Hornet* and an hour later an attack fleet of thirty-five aircraft took off from *Yorktown*.

The first to reach the target was Torpedo Squadron 8, from *Hornet*, led by the intrepid Lieutenant-Commander John Waldron. But his old-fashioned and unescorted Douglas Devastators were surrounded by a large number of Zeros and one after another they were shot down in flames. Every one of the fifteen aircraft was lost, and Ensign George H. Gay, who was picked up from the sea the next day by a navy Catalina, was the only man to be rescued.

The torpedo squadrons from *Enterprise* and *Yorktown* plunged into the attack after them, and they too were roughly handled. In the end only six aircraft survived out of the total force of forty-one, and they did not achieve a single hit. Nevertheless, their blood was not shed in vain. The low-altitude Devastators drew the Zeros down after them, and thus made possible a surprise attack by the Dauntless dive-bombers, which attacked from a high altitude.

Lieutenant-Commander Clarence McClusky, of *Enterprise*, leading eighteen Dauntless dive-bombers, made straight for the estimated position of the fleet. He failed to find it, however, and after flying on westward for a short time, surmising correctly that Nagumo's task-force had altered

course, he turned north and continued the search. This was one of the most significant decisions of the battle. The thirty-four dive-bombers from *Hornet* found themselves in a similar position, but they turned south and did not find their target.

McClusky was extremely lucky. At 0955 he spotted the destroyer *Arashi*, followed it, and ten minutes later spotted Nagumo's fleet through a break in the clouds. At about the same time *Yorktown*'s dive-bomber squadron led by Lieutenant-Commander Maxwell F. Leslie, which had arrived by a different route, spotted their target. McClusky's aircraft began dive-bombing attacks on three of the Japanese aircraft-carriers at 1022. Three minutes later, when Leslie's squadron began their dive-bombing attack on the *Soryu*, the four carriers of Nagumo's task-force had almost completed their preparations, and were heading directly into the wind, ready for their aircraft to take off. Rear-Admiral Kusaka later bewailed the fact that, given just five more minutes, the aircraft would probably all have been in the air and moving in a great mass to attack the US aircraft-carriers. The whole shape of the battle altered in those few minutes. Four bombs struck *Kaga*, and as soon as it had gone up in flames, McClusky's squadron scored three direct hits on the *Soryu* and another on the *Akagi*, and a great cloud of black smoke went up from these three aircraft-carriers. In the normal course of events, bombs of between 550 and 1,100 pounds would damage the flight deck of an aircraft-carrier, but would hardly destroy the whole ship. In this case, however, the three carriers each had a full complement of aircraft loaded with fuel, torpedoes, and bombs, so that fires once started spread in a rapid series of explosions, and these, exacerbated by the fact that the damage control units were caught unprepared, were fatal to the three huge ships.

#### Hiryu hits back

Initially the *Hiryu* escaped damage and in a spirit of furious revenge sent up eighteen escorted Vals, seven of which eluded *Yorktown*'s combat air patrol and penetrated the anti-aircraft fire from the carrier's screening cruisers and destroyers to severely damage the vessel with three bombs. A second strike by ten escorted Kates scored two torpedo hits and doomed the carrier. Within fifteen minutes of the torpedoes crashing into her port side Captain Buckmaster ordered the crew to abandon ship, but the carrier was still afloat two days later when the Japanese submarine I-68 found her in the afternoon of 6th June and, penetrating her screen, sunk her. Meanwhile dive-bombers from Task Force 16 had crippled *Hiryu*.

Following the news of the destruction of

Nagumo's task force the staff of the Combined Fleet ordered all their forces to proceed to an attack on Midway Island. Kurita's Close Support Group of four heavy cruisers and two destroyers in the van was within ninety nautical miles of the island by the middle of the night and was preparing for battle on the following morning, but Rear-Admiral Spruance, wary of being caught in a night battle, for the Japanese navy specialized in night fighting, had begun to retreat eastwards in the evening. When Yamamoto learned of this he called off the whole operation, and ordered the withdrawal of the fleet.

The Battle of Midway is of particular interest in the history of naval warfare in that it marked the end of the transition period between the era of battleship domination and that of the aircraft-carrier. But the Battle of Midway, unlike Salamis, did not decide the outcome of the entire war in a moment. Unlike Jutland (p. 543) it did not bring together the opposing forces in their entirety; unlike the battle of the Japan Sea it was not a conflict ending in the utter destruction of one of the two sides. If one considers the battles of the Pacific War from the point of view of their scale, then the Battle of the Philippine Sea and the Battle of Leyte Gulf were both greater than Midway. It can be said, indeed, that the Battle of Midway was the point in the Pacific War where the tide turned but, contrary to what is often stated, it was not the decisive battle determining the course of the entire war. Japan did lose four of her major aircraft-carriers, it is true, but this left *Zuikaku* and *Shokaku* besides six smaller carriers, which more or less matched America's fleet of three large carriers and a smaller one. At the same time Japan retained her superiority in battleships and heavy cruisers. In other words it can be said that the Battle of Midway broke Japan's superiority in the Pacific and restored the balance between the Japanese and American navies.

As is amply demonstrated by statistics, what really wore down the fighting power of the Japanese navy was the exhausting struggle for the Solomon Islands which began in August 1942. As compared to the Battle of Midway, where Japan lost 296 aircraft and 114 airmen, representing twenty per cent of the total number attached to Nagumo's task-force, in the battle for the Solomons the figures were as high as some 3,000 aircraft and 6,200 men.

No doubt the primary significance of the Battle of Midway lay in its psychological aspect. In the words of the naval historian Rear-Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison 'Midway was the first really smashing defeat inflicted on the Japanese navy in modern times.' But it had by no means been a foregone conclusion.

# 1944



Jane of the Mirror

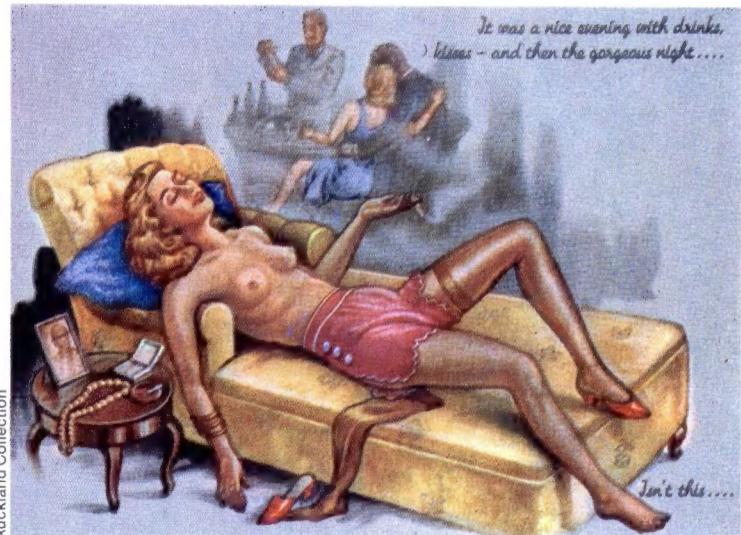
One of the favourite pin-ups of the war was the heroine of a strip cartoon published in the *Daily Mirror*. Jane had been popular since her introduction in *Jane's Journal or the Diary of a Bright Young Thing* in 1932, due to the ease with which she managed to divest herself of most of her clothing. During the war she became a heroine and American troops followed her adventures with as much enthusiasm as their British allies. There was much speculation as to whether the daring lady would ever appear entirely devoid of clothing, and when, at last, it happened the US forces paper in the Far East reported: 'Well, sirs, you can go home now. Right smack out of the blue and with no one even to threaten her, Jane peeled a week ago. The British 36th Division immediately gained six miles and the British attacked in the Arakan. Maybe we Americans ought to have Jane, too.'

**Below:** Jane in typical situation. Her adventures ran from 1939 to 1959

Krupp's army

By the end of 1944 more than 70,000 foreign workers and prisoners of war were employed by the Krupp works in and around Essen. They lived in sixty camps, the largest of which accommodated three thousand. Most of these camps were destroyed at least once during the bombing and were reconstructed by their occupants whose living conditions declined to a sub-human level. The plight of the women workers was described by a German police official after the war when he spoke to investigators collecting evidence for the Nuremberg Trials:

'The camp inmates were mostly Jewish women and girls from Hungary and Rumania... (they) had to sleep in a damp cellar. The beds were made on the floor and consisted of a straw-filled sack and two blankets. In most cases it was not possible for the prisoners to wash themselves daily as there was no water... I could often observe from the Krupp factory during the lunch break how the prisoners boiled their under-



Auckland Collection

*It was a nice evening with drinks... kisses - and then the gorgeous night....*

*I'm this....*

**Above left:** '...arf-a-dollar, I said. Ain't you got to know our currency yet?' Punch cartoon shows one of the problems faced by Americans stationed in London. **Above right:** German propaganda leaflet dropped behind Allied lines and directed at Americans. The text on the back is reproduced below

'Don't grudge her these nights. She is young and beautiful. The human body and its desires are powerful. At first she tried very hard to remain faithful but she lost this battle against herself as thousands of wives and girls back home did before her. It all started with an evening out, with going to the movies and to some bar; but it soon became real love.'

'Only by the picture at her side she is occasionally reminded of her husband who is—for months now—somewhere in Western Europe, fighting a stubborn enemy, freezing and suffering in a muddy foxhole. Now she does not even turn his picture to the wall when another man is staying with her and holding her in his arms.'

Yanks Go Home

'Yes, it is the wife of Joe Jones or of one of you other boys. She dreams of last night. In her thoughts she is enjoying the wonderful hours again which she has just spent with her new friend.



# 1944

## Crackpots

The green-walled courtroom in Washington's Federal District Court building was small (40×38 ft.) for the largest sedition trial in US history. The ever-present question before the court was big: can a democracy defend itself legally?

Each of the 28 men and two women on trial last week faced ten years in prison, a \$10,000-fine. The charge: the 30 had conspired to overthrow the US Government in favour of a Nazi dictatorship, and had tried to demoralize the armed forces. The probable defense: the accused were merely enjoying their constitutional right to free speech when they expressed such sentiments as: "The Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbour was deliberately invited by the public officials of the US", "The Government of the US and Congress are controlled by Communists, International Jews and plutocrats", "The cause of the Axis powers is the cause of justice and morality and any act of war against them is unjust and immoral."

The accused were a strangely assorted crew. Handsome Joe McWilliams, the soapbox Führer who used to berate the Jews and laud Hitler on Manhattan street corners, got top billing in the indictment ("United States of America v. Joseph E. McWilliams, et al"). Quiet, swart Lawrence Dennis, US fascism's No. 1 intellectual, sat glumly near benign-faced James True, organizer of America First, Inc., and inventor of the "kike-killer" (Pat. No. 2,026,077), a short rounded club made in two sizes (one for ladies). Chicago's Mrs Elizabeth (The Red Network) Dilling, leader of the "Mothers' Crusade" which once sprawled noisily in the hall of the Senate office building, looked coldly at her co-defendant, peppery Mrs. Lois de Lafayette ("TNT") Washburn, who favoured delighted photographers with a stiff-armed Nazi salute.

On behalf of their clients, who have shown little enthusiasm for democratic ways, the 22 lawyers energetically demanded every final democratic safeguard. All week long the legalists bobbed up and down, objecting, concurring, complaining. They applied for a writ of mandamus to have the whole thing dropped.

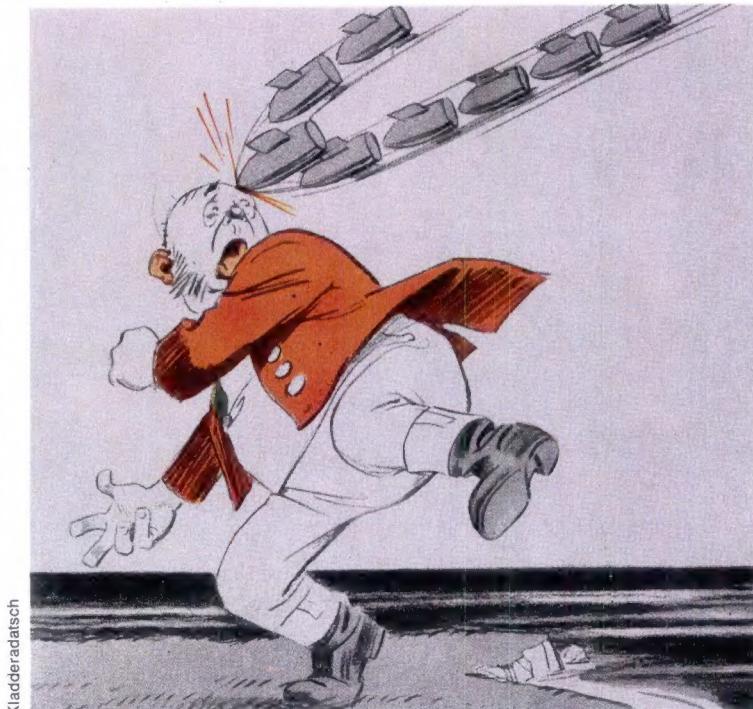
Most of the US press called for a fair trial, but no nonsense. But the isolationist *Chicago Tribune*, favourite organ of most of the defendants, wrote indulgently of the "crackpots" who were the victims of a New Deal "smear campaign".

Time, 1st May 1944

(The trial lasted seven months, when the judge died with no verdict reached. The case was never re-opened.)

## Medal handout

In the European Theatre of Operations the US Army has bestowed 89,477 medals—82,280 of them in the Eighth Air Force. Altogether, in all theatres, the US Army has passed out approximately 175,000 medals in World War II. In contrast to the lavish US handout of tinsel



and ribbon, the British Army, which has been more than two years longer in the war, has given only 10,896 medals; the British Navy 6,570; the RAF, 9,685.

"Nowadays, US troops in England even kid one another about their medals. (A standing wisecrack: 'He got that medal for preventing rape; he changed his mind.') But the US is not the only reputable army with a lot on its chest. Russian officials joyfully announced last week that over 2,000,000 decorations had been bestowed on Soviet heroes."

Time, 3rd April 1944

## Misplaced confidence

'We intend to live our own life in our own way and we know that Russia will respect our way of living.'

Jan Masaryk, foreign minister of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile

## Reduction in Bread Rations

'By order of the German Authorities... the Controlling Committee hereby orders as follows:

'The amount of the ration of bread which may be obtained per person per week for household consumption shall be in accordance with the following scale:

'Children under 1½ years of age 1 lb. 8 oz.

'Children aged 1½ years and over but under 10 years of age 3 lb.

'Adolescents, aged 10 years and over but under 21 years of age 4 lb.

'All other consumers 3 lb.'

'Dated this 22nd day of November, 1944. A.J.LAINE'

'For and on behalf of the Controlling Committee of the States of Guernsey.'

'Genehmigt (Approved)

Guernsey, den 22. November 1944  
Platzkommandantur I St. Helier  
Nebenstelle Guernsey. SCHNEBERGER  
(Militäerverwaltungsrat.)  
Guernsey Evening Press, Great Britain's  
only Nazi-controlled newspaper

## First of the V1s

The first official note of the arrival of a flying bomb appeared in a report by the chief engineer of London Transport: 'Yesterday an air-raid warning was sounded at 11.37 pm. It was reported from Kentish Town station that a noise and a flash had been observed in the direction of Prince of Wales Road. At 11.51 the signalman at Farringdon reported that something had fallen between Farringdon and Kings Cross, which was believed to be an aeroplane.'

That was on 14th June. During the next three months, eight thousand V1s were launched against London, where the alert against air raids was in operation eight and a half hours every day.

**Above:** German cartoon foresees Great Britain's imminent fall with help of V1s.  
**Below:** 'That's Gilchrist—in charge of post-war planning.' Allied victories at last promised an end to war-time shortages